A LOSING HAZARD

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A LOSING HAZARD.

BY

COURTENEY GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "LITTLE LADY LORRAINE."

"O! . . . . region all too fair
For self-delighting fancy to endure
That silence only should inhabit there,
Wild beasts, or uncouth savages impure!
But, intermingled with the generous seed,
Grew many a poisonous weed;
Thus fares it still with all that takes its birth
From human care, or grows upon the breast of earth."

ARTEGRAL AND ELIDURE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,
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A LOSING HAZARD.

CHAPTER I.

"She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,
And humble cares and delicate fears;
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
And love, and thought, and joy."

WORDSWORTH.

AN excited crowd, a blazing sun, and a race being run.

This was in Holland; September, 1863.

Time after time the drivers rush along the course: the painted wheels flash by; the bright harness, the waving tassels, the gay streamers, the white reins glitter rainbow hues,

back to the spectators; the men throw up their hats, forgetting their national phlegm, the women laugh and exclaim, and smiling, shake their gaily bedizened heads as their favourites pass; handkerchiefs are waved, and "Who'll win?" is the cry.

This is the great race of the day; five competitors are beaten out of the field; only four remain. Jan Krusemann, the proud old boer, whom everyone loves and respects; Heer Van der Pyl, who is engaged with the Englishmen here at the works; young Van Bruynesteyn, the neighbouring lord; and Baron Roeland van Franckenburg, everyone's favourite, and everyone's friend, who is landlord to old Jan Krusemann, and who owns nearly all the country round.

The excitement became intense. Party-feeling rose high.

Heer Van der Pyl was beaten.

"Another gone, Miss Vincent!" said an Englishman, who was standing by a lady's pony carriage, looking on. "He seems disappointed too!" he added, as Heer Van der

Pyl brought his *hard dräver* gracefully round, and made him stand on a line with the other defeated ones.

Miss Vincent turned sharply to look at the vanquished hero, and made a little mock grimace of sympathy, as she caught his eye.

"You seem interested!" said her companion, for the race had begun again, and she was watching it intently. There was an inflection of bitterness in his tone.

"I am, Mr. Randolph. Which will you back?"

"Which do you want to win?" asked he.

"I do not care!" said she, with a sudden assumption of carelessness. "Ah! he is beaten!" she exclaimed, turning first red, then white. "Oh no! I was wrong! See! Roeland is still victor!"

"Roeland!" muttered George Randolph. "You are familiar!"

"One forgets!" she answered laughing. "How cross you are to-day! Who is that coming towards us?"

A tall young man was threading his way through the crowd, and approaching them.

"My old friend, Guy Travers. He came last night. He is here to work with me."

"Oh! to stay?" asked the lady, slightly arching her brows.

"Yes; I hope you will like him. You say I am cross to-day," he added, changing his tone. "So I am; I hate to see you here. It is no place for ladies."

"Nonsense. I am English. We do what we like. This country is so dull, I must have every inch of license that I can get hold of."

Just then, shouts and cries rent the air. The race had dwindled down to competition between old Jan and young Roeland. At first Jan wanted to withdraw, but Roeland would not hear of it. Adrian van Bruynesteyn, with his vanquished horse panting its heart out and flecked with foam, was inciting them on.

"Jan, I am not victor yet! Shall we divide honours?"

"Mijn Heer, you are victor, assuredly. My poor horse cannot win."

"Ah! Jan—you will not run against me!" said young Roeland, sorrowfully.

"You shall not say that, Baron Roeland!" said the old boer proudly, and again he turned his horse back to the starting post.

Clara Vincent, George Randolph, and Guy Travers standing together, watched them. A curious smile flitted over Miss Vincent's countenance as Roeland passed at a slow negligent pace. There was time, however, to look at her face, and the blood rushed into his as their eyes met. Randolph saw the reflection, sure enough; but when he turned quickly to look for some sign on her countenance, he was disappointed: her features were as smiling, as calmly pure, as the sky at summer noon.

So once more the race flew by. But two of them this time. Roeland, firm, calm, placid as a rock—with light hand, quick eye, and ready arm. Jan, hot, nervous, and

anxious about this rather unseemly competition against his young master.

"Roeland!" "Jan!" "Jan!" "Roeland!" called the countrywomen, while the maidens laughed and trembled, and sighed for Roeland to win, though they knew they ought to wish Jan to be first. But then old Jan did not matter so much, and Baron Roeland was so young, and so handsome, and always smiled so brightly to them as he lifted his hat!

So! Over! In at the winning-post!

Roeland first.

The men crowded round him and shook him by the hand. He sprang to the ground. Jan was coming in leisurely after him. He had not hastened when he saw that he was beaten.

Three hundred and sixty-three yards in twenty-two seconds!

It is quick work!

"Good, good, Baron Roeland!" said old Jan, smiling down upon him. "Bravely won!"

"And bravely run, friend Jan!" said Roeland as he seized his hand. "Next year you will beat me!"

They all pressed round Roeland: congratulations, and praises, kind words and smiles, were showered thickly upon him.

"He is the hero of the day!" said Guy Travers, in his *rôle* of spectator of the proceedings, for he knew no one here as yet.

"Come and be introduced to him!" said Randolph, and Miss Vincent put her ponies in motion, while the young men walked beside her. They could not get to Roeland; he was standing listlessly among the farmers, smiling, and answering cordially the civil speeches addressed to him on all sides. His manner was always winning; it was finished, considerate, natural, the manner of a thorough man of the world—a combination of perfect ease, and careful courtesy; an open confident smile, a speech somewhat reticent.

"Roeland's father should have seen him to-day;" said an old countrywoman, who was

standing in the crowd. "He would have been proud of him."

"Alas! Vrouw Jagdmann. The Baron is far above such cares now. He is in heaven, past the winning-post, and at rest!"

"Young Roeland must be sad all alone in that great house of his!"

"When will he take home a wife, I wonder?" said another.

The boerinen around laughed and blushed. They were not sure whether it would be so nice when a Madame Roeland came to the great house.

Just then a Jagdwagen drove up, and stopped on the outside of the throng. A pretty blonde head with a blue feather appeared.

"I wanted Doctor Saltichus. Is he here?"

The boers and peasants ran about for the pretty lady.

"We cannot find him."

Roeland saw the carriage and hastily left his elevated position.

"What is it, Lisa? What is it? Have you come to give us our prizes?"

"No indeed!" laughed she. "I came for the doctor; my mother is not so well to-day, and I was anxious; he is not at his house: where can he be?"

"Send back your carriage with a message for him, and come and give us our prizes. We want you!"

Roeland was not used to have his will disputed.

A glance around showed the girl George Randolph and Miss Vincent standing together. She let her eyes fall with a sort of questioning look back to Roeland. He still insisted that she should come, so, taking his hand, she jumped to the ground and walked with him to the little stand where the prizes were arranged, waiting for distribution.

Up went the caps and handkerchiefs again. The boers were delighted. Miss Vincent was English, and had no right to give the prizes, but Freule Lisa van Hovenaar was Dutch. She had been born and bred at

Franewyk; this was charming! It was a compliment to her as well as to them. How clever of Baron Roeland to think of it!

"Other ladies come alone as well as I, I see!" said Miss Vincent laughing, as Lisa van Hovenaar passed the pony-carriage with Roeland.

"This is my first appearance at one of these gatherings," answered she in English, "and this is accidental. Roeland is going to make me a public character to-day."

They had been boy and girl together: he knew how the people loved her, and he wanted to please them.

She stopped to greet George Randolph: he presented his friend.

"Welcome to Holland, Mr. Travers!" said she gaily. "You have brought us the sunshine to-day! May we keep you both a long time!"

"You deserve it always!" said Travers, more gallantly than cleverly.

She, passing through the throng, smiling and speaking to all, seemed to him like a

young châtelaine of the olden time, or like an angel in woman's guise. An open frank smile, a face of more than average beauty, youth and wit, are passports to open quickly the portals of all hearts.

"I won, Miss Vincent! Not a word of congratulation?" said Roeland to Clara Vincent in a low voice.

"I did not think you would win. I have no word for you here!" Her face was cold and haughty.

"Not here? Afterwards then—at Bergenend?" said he eagerly.

"Afterwards—at Bergenend!" assented she slowly, and stooping to arrange the carriage rug as she said it.

He left her with a triumphant smile on his face. She too smiled as she watched him walking away, triumphing also!

Lightly Freule Van Hovenaar stepped up to the platform, and acclamations rose into the air on all sides. The old women clapped their hands, while their laced caps nodded to and fro in wild approval: the men shouted,

and called her name, while the boerinen thanked their stars that they were not grand ladies to-day, and wondered whether she would have to make a speech, and if she were not very frightened.

She was dressed in blue and white ; a short white petticoat slashed with blue, and the blue dress looped up tastefully over it. A pair of tempting little boots showed beneath.

Freule Lisa was not frightened. She had known nearly every one all her life. They were mostly her dear friends, save indeed the English workmen ;—and there was quite a colony of them here, working at the reclamations and the harbour—these she was not quite so sure about ; but, then, they were all under George Randolph. And he—well ! George Randolph was a very handsome young man ; clever too, and a hundred things besides. Freule Lisa had never seen any one whom she admired half so much as George Randolph, and she *was* rather afraid of him.

One by one they came up to her—these excited happy victors, and the pretty little

hands gave the prize, while her laughing lips spoke some merry word, and asked kindly after the good horse, which probably she had heard more or less about for some weeks past. Some of the competitors were strangers from Gelderland and Friesland, some from Dordrecht and other places. To these she said she hoped that it was only the first of future meetings, the first of many good fights.

"When does your turn come, Roeland?" said she, rather wearily.

"Last. Look, you have a large present to give me! Will you give me nothing besides, and what will you say to me?"

"Say, Roeland? You know how glad I am! One need not say that! Old friends know beforehand each other's thoughts!"

He smiled, pleased.

"But will you give me nothing besides? Nothing from you? You should have seen us! I wished for you!"

"Did you?"

"Make me a promise that some day the prize I want shall be mine."

"Hush! Dear Roeland, you pain me talking so."

Another winner waiting, and Roeland turning away, sullen and angry. He stepped down, and went over to Miss Vincent's carriage.

Then Lisa looked for George Randolph; but he did not come. She stood up there alone.

"Baron Roeland van Franckenburg," called out the crier in a loud voice.

"Roeland! Roeland!" rent the air.

Graciously Lisa van Hovenaar stood waiting there, with the great silver cup in her hand that he was to have.

Somewhat penitent, he came quickly back, and stood at her feet, looking up with smiling humility.

"What will you say to me?" asked he in a low voice that no one could hear.

She smiled.

"Baron Roeland, my friend," said the young girl flushing and raising her clear voice, "I am glad to give you this! I am glad you

have won. But I am sorry that my hands should be the means of giving you the prize that Franewyk offers you. I am not worthy to do this. Take it from them all, from all our kind friends, who are so glad it is yours, your triumph is theirs. For their sake, win more, Roeland, win always; and remember in the future that in your life's race Franewyk's eyes are on you, and that every prize you win, harder to hold as greater to strive for, will show your gratitude as well as your worthyness for all the affection and friendship that surrounds you to-day."

Some of the words fell too low to be heard except by those near. "Bravo!—Bravo!—Good!—Well said!" resounded on all sides. Franewyk was beside itself with joy. Was there ever a village so blessed? had any place such lords and ladies—so clever and so good?

Roeland bowed low over the cup.

"You shame me, Lisa," said he in a low voice.

Then smiling, he said as he stood beside her:

"My good friends, I can but thank you. Freule Lisa van Hovenaar has shamed me with her fair words and bright promises of a brilliant future. I neither deserve the one nor, I fear, can I act up to the other. But you may be sure, the prizes I shall try for, I shall do my best to win, and if the competition be as honest and as pleasantly exciting as it was to-day, my life would seem a light one: if, too, your praise meet me at the goal, as earnest, as sincere as to-day, that alone is sufficient to incite me to strive. However it be, I shall hope to work, and to win as I deserve. No man should hope for more than that! My friends, this is the first time I see you all together since my father's death. You know how I miss him: you too must miss his kindness and justice. Let me strive to fill his place towards you all as best I may. Let me thank you for your kindness and sympathy to me under his loss, for your universal friendship to me ever since.

"I have touched on a grave topic! I ask pardon. Let me change it, and bring smiles

to all faces, both Dutch and English, by naming the fair lady who has graced our day here with her presence, and who has made our prizes trebly valuable to us by presenting them with her own hands, and giving us her kind thoughts and wishes besides. Freule Lisa van Hovenaar, receive our thanks! Little friend, am I wrong? you must be thanked, you know." He said that in a low voice, turning to her with a polite bow, hat in hand.

"You are very tiresome, Roeland. I hate hearing my name shouted about like that. Take me away!"

Right good English cheers there were among them, bravos, hurrahs, and everything else that a joyous crowd could think of, arrived at the end of an annual holiday, and trying to spin out the fun as long as they could.

Then the band began to play, the women gathered together their cloaks and baskets, and departure was the order of the day.

Roeland put Lisa into her carriage and

turned to seek his *hard-dräver*. He had an appointment that must be kept.

Just then, Miss Vincent's ponies took it into their heads to consider the band an outrage—the crowd moving by was a crowning insult—and they asserted themselves by kicking and plunging, curvetting, and threatening every moment to upset the carriage.

George Randolph was there, he tried to reach their heads.

"Don't touch them! Quiet, Pegasus! Quiet! Quiet!" She managed them admirably.

"Let your servant drive, Miss Vincent, or shall I?"

"No! no! It's all right."

Just then they swerved quickly round and bolted. The servant had been standing beside them, and she was alone; but he could not reach her or catch her up. Like the wind they went. The shouting, rushing, tearing crowd behind her only made them worse. The lanes are soft and sandy in Holland, narrow too, but to-day she was not

likely to meet any one. Every one was behind her. Down under the over-arching boughs they went; the sun glinted through them on her handsome face; down, jolting over this, sinking into that, speeding along they went.

Clara Vincent did not scream or lose her nerve. They had done this before. They knew her voice; she believed she could stop them when she liked.

"They will tire soon," she thought.

On, on. She rather liked the excitement of it.

"My *hard-drivers!*" said she to herself.

Then she came to an open space; a sort of common with heather and rough sandy soil.

She had better stay this headlong career.

"Stop!" said she. "Stop, Pegasus! wo, my pretty Paddy! wo! gently, my man!"

They slackened their speed, perhaps all the more willingly that she had not fought against them. Pegasus arched his neck and began to think he had been a fool.

"Gently, gently!" said her soft voice.

Paddy, all flecked with foam and trembling with excitement, re-assured.

So, gradually, she brought them under control, and then turned neatly into a narrow sand lane to the right. Here, hidden from view and sheltered from sun, she walked them slowly for nearly a mile. Rounding a sharp corner in the road, she suddenly came upon young Roeland, who was waiting for her.

CHAPTER II.

"Whence golden harvests, cities, warlike towers,
And Pleasure's sumptuous bowers;
Whence all the fixed delights of house and home,
Friendships that will not break, and love that cannot roam."

WORDSWORTH.

GEORGE RANDOLPH and Guy Travers on the top of a sand hill. They had walked off after the race, eager to be alone, to talk over the past and the future. Boys together, one with expectations, the other without, they had never forgotten their early friendship, and now, when Fortune had administered a sharp blow to Guy Travers, and had despoiled him of his inheritance, reducing him to a level with George, his old friend had written to

him at once, and had suggested that as he was doomed to industry somewhere, he might as well come and work with him and make life pleasanter to both.

Ergo, here they are.

Travers had arrived in Holland that morning. George Randolph had come down from Amsterdam by a morning train, after meeting with his directors, and now, as he walked with Travers, was explaining that he was anxious to catch a glimpse of the harbour before night, as there had been a storm during his absence, and he was nervous about the result.

At Franewyk one hears nothing.

"So there was a smash, old fellow, and everything has gone?" said Randolph, as they walked up the sand hills swiftly, now slipping back a step or two in the soft sand or on the bright moss, now planting their sticks firmly into the ground and making way.

"No; not everything! But much more than one can spare. And my father could

not bear to sell the old place. . . . I have sisters, too! I could not live idly there. Jack's in the navy, you know. I felt I must do something. Amuse oneself one cannot with a broken down family like that around one. At least I couldn't."

"Neither the heart nor the money, eh?"

"As you say. If one has the money one has not the heart. I shall be best satisfied by putting my shoulder to the wheel if you will let me try. I have always liked and admired an engineer's life. He fights against, studies, and subdues Nature and the elements. Noble enemies to have!"

"The elements of knowledge must be mastered also, though. Tell me, Travers, how did it happen, this smash?"

"A system of fraud had been going on for some time. One of your saints as usual; wealthy, charitable, and prosperous—the head of the bank—Sir Anthony Lewis by name—and then it all blew up; he had gone too far. He ended by shooting himself, and disembarrassed his family of his precious person at

the same time that he bequeathed to them poverty and disgrace."

"And you ?"

"About a shilling in the pound, I fancy."

By this time they had reached the top of the hill. Randolph was silent; he was scanning the horizon for his pier. Travers studied the scenery. There had been a storm in the night, thunder and lightning, and since, in the morning, the rain had poured down heavily. The undergrowth was dripping; pearls and diamonds twinkled and trembled on twig and branch; the green moss and bright flowers made fitting accompaniment to the chorus of glad brilliance around, while the shadows flitting lightly over, deepened the beauty of earth's changing countenance.

In the distance, out beyond the line of hills the sea rolled and stretched, now bright, now sullen, now smiling, then suddenly frowning, like a coquette who has just won another triumph and scarcely knows whether to be satisfied or not. Below, nestling in a nook

of the hills, safely protected by them from the caprice of the sea, was the village of Ryssenwyk. To George Randolph, who so earnestly sought for beauty in this home of his adoption, who longed for some relief from the flat monotony of Holland, it had sometimes brought a vision of Switzerland, and of its pretty villages. *Quod volumus, facile credimus!* In some degree, he was right. The sand-hills are picturesque, and the cottages of the fishermen close under their sides, with little paths winding up from them—short cuts to the ocean, that finds the poor people subsistence—have something tender, pathetic, and confiding about them, that might well strike an eye weary of universal flatness, and seeking, as George did, for relief from the dull round of practical utility with which he had somewhat too much to do. Here and there, hares scurried about, chasing each other in play, or frightened by some distant sound. On the hillside a goat was browsing, and below, some partridges rose whirring into the air.

"I cannot see it, Guy," said Randolph anxiously. "Come on to the next point."

Travers, roused from his study of scenery, prepared to follow.

"How long have you been out here, now, George?"

"About five years. We shall get on faster now the Government have taken us up. I believe it goes against the grain with Bennett and Bradlaw, the contractors, and my chiefs, you know. But Vincent is satisfied. The capital advanced would never have sufficed. Now the work will be done quicker, and more satisfactorily to me; better for the place, and for England's future fame."

"And for your's, George."

"Individuals are apt to get sunk in this sort of undertaking. But perhaps, as you say, I am more likely to get some credit now, than when working only under the shadow of Mr. Bennett's capital. The responsibility will be less difficult, too. It has often been anxious work, explaining intricacies and necessities first to my masters, and then manag-

ing them to get permission to carry them out."

"Perhaps I may be of some little use to you, George."

"Yes. I shall have your friendly counsel, at least. Your predecessor, Munro, was a knave as well as a fool."

Travers was silent. At home in England, with his five days a week, his friends, and his shooting, he had often wondered over George's solitary career. Looking over his letters, he had felt interested, and even ambitious, too, about the reclamations of land, about the barring out of the sea, about that — to him, then, mysterious — Maeslem Meer.

"The magnitude of such works is never known, never appreciated, save by those who have the doing of them!"

Randolph did not answer, and again Travers fell to thinking how often, in the early days, complaints had gone over the sea to his friendly ear about the management, tact, and diplomacy required; about explana-

tions to be given—dearly loved schemes to be sacrificed, and self to be controlled.

"You see I have always been alone here—virtually alone and unbefriended. Vincent is all very well, but he won't stir an inch beyond what he sees, and that isn't far. The others, who, in fact, have reaped the benefit and gained the credit of my brain-work and mental strain, only come over now and again, and the brunt of the anxiety and responsibility is thrown on my shoulders."

Guy Travers smiled.

"I know—yes!" said Randolph, impulsively. "A friend coming to live in the desert with one is no light matter. Solitude has weighed heavily upon me; I am delivered from that to-day."

He threw up his head and strode on quicker.

"Look here, Guy!" suddenly exclaimed he, and stopped, pointing on in front of them —the bright changing scene of cloud and distant sea, the nearer jewelled moss and flower seemed pranked in smiles for them.

"It is all very peaceful, isn't it? this little world—what am I going to bring upon it?"

"I am coming after you, George, by the next train," said the other. "These are the old fits of compunction. I know them well. Just as you are getting on, success dawning, and so on, you turn round, dissatisfied. Here am I, the one man with the power, the will, twisting the rest round my finger—oh, go on! let us have it all. But I know it."

"Ah! you forget. Suffering much, sacrificing much, toiling much—you forget that! Why should I break this silence, people this desert, mar this harmony, bring sin and sorrow here?"

"Why?" echoed Travers, sarcastically.

"Not for any pleasure of mine, certainly."

"No, certainly not."

No; each heart echoed it. When ships should pass in proud procession on the horizon, and gay flags should flaunt near the shore, when houses should have sprung up, and wealth, civilization, and commerce were flourishing here, when simplicity had gone,

and all the hot-bed of sin was firmly established past rooting out, when luxury was rife, and pleasure had taken the place of the dull works and the dreary desolation around, then —he would be far away, engineering somewhere else, gardening and sowing like seeds on some other spot of God's earth, which had been till then forgotten, perhaps, for it—who knows—blissfully ignored. An unwelcome thought, if pursued so far as this.

"It must be all right, George," said Guy, looking straight ahead, and stopping, for he had made his point, and had reached first the summit of the hill. "It must be well."

"Is it well?" answered the other, musingly. "May towering pride and irrepressible ambition for oneself and one's profession spur one on thus ruthlessly to subdue even the elements to obedience, and dash souls thus selfishly to ruin, till God Himself puts His veto on it, and stops us? He limits the waves—are we——. By Jove! it's gone."

Travers' eyes followed the direction of Randolph's gaze.

It was too true. There was no sign of pier or harbour—only that endless expanse of changing swaying water.

The two limitless beings, stricken with sudden defeat, stared at each other for half a second in blank dismay.

"Nonsense! it can't be gone," said Travers, fighting against it as a man always does fight against misfortune at first.

"But it is. For the last month and a half I have been able to see the end of it from here. I must go down in the trolly: will you come? Mere mud heaps; that's all. . . ." went on Randolph angrily, as he set off down the hills. "Till they are finished and properly protected our works and fortifications are no better than the castles of sand the children build for the next tide to wash away."

On the road, they were met by young Meadows, the son of the foreman. His grave face alarmed Travers, but Randolph, more used to disaster, thought that he was only needlessly troubled, and immediately tried to seem re-assuringly cheerful.

"We have been expecting you all day, sir," said the young man, touching his hat.

"Yes; I dare say. I should have been down before, but Mr. Travers has just come. I looked for you at Franewyk. So the sea has been playing us false again, eh?"

"Yes—sir—yes—have you——"

"For God's sake, what is the matter?"

"Have not you heard, sir?"

"No—nothing. I know nothing. Only came back from Amsterdam to day. What?"

"My father, sir, washed over and drowned. Jim Harper and Joe Dodge whom he took with him, in a bad way."

"What! your father drowned? I can't believe it or understand. Did he go down to the sea then at night?"

"Yes; will you come on, sir?" turning to walk back with them. "We had advised him not in the evening; but he was restive and could not bear it—you away and all—though everything had been made as secure as we could! and in the night, without telling any of us, he just got up and slipped out,

went to Harper's and Dodge's—they live together you know—and took them with him. He never came back alive, sir; they were out all night, and in the morning the body was washed on shore."

"Poor fellow! poor brave fellow!" said Randolph, and they walked on in silence.

"And you—and your sister, eh? when was he brought back to you?"

"I helped take him back, sir. I cannot say it, sir—I cannot—though he was dead enough, poor father!—this morning. Poor Jane! I don't know when she will get over it. Will you come in, sir, or will you go to Harper's first?"

Harper's door was nearest.

Travers and Randolph turned in. A crowd of people. A man sitting over the fire in the front room—another on a low bed in the next.

The people made way for Mr. Randolph. They were mostly the wives of the English workmen.

"A bad business!" said Randolph.

There was a chorus of voices at once.

"Is Dodge very bad?" asked he, for Harper was there.

"Yes, sir. I don't know whether he'll pull through. The doctor's with him."

"And you, Harper?"

"Better now, sir, thank you; but precious stiff still and painful. It was an awful night, sir! I shall never forget Mr. Meadows' yell, sir, as he went down."

"How was it, Harper? Tell us both. This is Mr. Travers, who I told you was coming."

"In place of Mr. Munro, sir. Yes; all right. A bad beginning for you, sir. Well, sir, I can hardly tell you how it happened. It was so dark; there was such a crashing and smashing, and such a noise and roaring, we could hardly hear what we said. The wind seemed to get hold of the wood, and the sea to get hold of the rails and the piers; the stays, and all seemed to go one after the other—a pretty sight there was this morning!—and then all at once, when we

could do nothing, a wave took Jim Dodge and carried him off his feet into the sea; and Mr. Meadows, he—well, he was going to jump into the boat, and then he missed his aim, what with the wind or something—and it took him straight against one of the great boulders that was all jagged and sticking out, through some of the others being torn away—and so he got stunned I take it—and though we pulled, and pulled, and called, and waited—for Jim Dodge had laid hold of the boat and was in—though not good for much—yet we never came up with Mr. Meadows again till the light broke and the wind went down, and then there he was stark dead on the shore! But that cry of his—I shall never forget it till my dying day! Ah! he was an honest man, sir, and a good master."

Harper turned away from them all, sullen and sorrowful, and stared into the fire as if he could say no more.

Randolph stood a moment waiting in sympathizing silence, then motioning to

Travers to follow him, they went into the next room.

The doctor was leaning over the sufferer, a woman was standing beside him with a tumbler in her hand.

"Give him some more!" said he to her, and nodded to Randolph as he spoke.

"That's it; you are better now, eh, Dodge?"

The sick man half opened his eyes, and nodded; then smiled a sort of grateful recognition to Randolph for coming.

They shook their heads and spoke in low voices.

"But he'll soon come round," said Dr. Saltichus presently. "To-morrow we shall have him up with Harper. Mr. Randolph, I think young Meadows wanted me to see his sister. Are you coming?"

They passed out of the house together, and outside found Meadows waiting for them.

"Wretched cottages!" said Travers, glad to breathe fresh air again.

"Only thrown up in a hurry while the works last," explained Randolph.

"It might have paid to have built them better," said Saltichus. "They would let by-and-by."

Meadows held the door for them.

A woman of about thirty was sitting crouched together in a heap; a boy of nine was sitting before her.

"Come, come, Jane! you must take courage!" said Randolph. "For John's sake you must not give way so."

"Would you like to walk in, sir? It is in there."

The three men looked at one another; then silently they went in. The doctor raised the white sheet, and poor Randolph felt choking as he recognized his true old friend, who had worked and battled so long and so faithfully by his side.

They went back, and Randolph sat down beside her, drawing the boy to him.

"Well! we shall all sorrow together for

many a long day. It is sad for you, Mrs. Lord, but it is almost worse for me.

Travers saw Saltichus start, and a strange frightened look came over his face. All his confidence seemed gone.

"Lord! I thought your name was Meadows;" said he gently.

"My father's name, sir: my husband's name is Lord."

She had taken her hands from her face and seemed roused. She had great black handsome eyes, and she was looking at him intently. "Are you our new doctor, sir?"

"Yes."

"Ah! Then you did not know!"

"No! Dr. Saltichus has never seen you before, I dare say," said Randolph soothingly. "And this is Mr. Travers, my old friend. He has come instead of Mr. Munro."

"I am glad for you, sir," said she softly. "You will want some one more than ever now."

"I am glad you have a husband to comfort you," said Saltichus feelingly.

"Husband, sir! I've no husband! Tell them, Jack." She appealed to her brother.

"Jane's . . . ."

"Jane!" echoed Saltichus.

"Jane's husband is a sailor somewhere, sir—in America, I believe. He will come back some day, she says. I don't know!——"

"He will, Jack," said the young woman angrily. "How wicked you are! He always said if he were ill or dying he would send me a sign that I might know—I've never had it —so he'll come back!"

"Yes, dear," said the brother.

"What was the sign?" asked Travers.

"A scrap of paper—I think—but yet not a common scrap, I fancy. Something in it of importance, I think by the way he said it. I don't know——"

"And what was his name, Mrs. Lord?" asked Salticus.

"John, sir: John Lord."

Again Travers saw a strange look flash over the doctor's face.

"Scraps of paper are easily lost," said Travers.

The men's eyes met, and Travers felt one of those senseless feelings of prejudice run through him, that so often influence people afterwards, and are so hard to overcome.

"John was only a sailor, sir! Father did not like it, thought I had lowered myself. But he was a boy in our village, sir. I used to look up to him, and listen to his wonderful stories. Poor father! Poor John! Here I am without you both now. But John will come back, won't he, sir? you see it, sir?"

Her dark eyes pleaded to Saltichus.

"John will come back," echoed he.

"And you, sir? you come from England, too, sir?"

"No," said he, half smiling; "from America."

"Ah! I thought not, sir. Not the same quite. Maybe you have heard nothing of John, sir?"

Randolph and Jack smiled at her simplicity. Saltichus, too, smiled.

"No, I have not," said he.

"I suppose not," said she.

After that they talked of her father, of the storm, and comforted her sorrow.

As Travers and Randolph left to walk home to their office together, Miss Vincent's pony-carriage passed them.

She was driving quickly.

Half-a-mile farther on, Baron Roeland, too, fell in with them; he was taking home his *hard-driver.*

After the scenes they had left, it seemed like figures in a pageant passing by. Travers barely thought of them; save for the quick angry flush that mounted to Randolph's brow, to die away as quickly, he would not have remembered the incident. Yet Roeland walked his horse beside them, listened patiently to their tale, felt sharply too for Meadows' loss, and offered to do anything he could for the daughter or for the other men.

"They come here to my country; they are mine as much as any Dutchmen while they are here. Let me do something!" said Roeland with an eager helplessness that won Travers' heart.

But there was nothing to be done.

Lisa van Hovenaar had heard and had sent to them already.

"What could he and Clara Vincent have been saying to each other?" said Randolph to himself, as they parted at diverging roads.

CHAPTER III.

"Well, Brutus, thou art noble, yet I see,
Thy honourable metal may be wrought
From that it is dispos'd; therefore, 'tis meet
That noble minds keep ever with their likes:
For who so firm that cannot be seduc'd?"

JULIUS CÆSAR.

THIS is what they said to one another: "Power quiescent, I see before me!" and she smiled, as he lifted his hat. "You did not do much to save me."

"I thought you would not care to have me scampering after you. Besides, I believed and trusted in you. Is not my . . . 'power quiescent' a proof of it? I waited, believing!"

"Forgiven then, Roeland;" and she put

her hand in his, English fashion. He kept it, till she coloured angrily and set it free.

"I have not seen you alone for so long," said he. "Have you nothing to say to me?" he went on, purposely ignoring her anger.

And she was looking at him intently while he spoke. Was he slipping through her fingers, this handsome young Baron? She had been musing over this, commenting to herself on his looks and smiles to Lisa van Hovenaar, during the whole of that lengthy mile under the trees, where the sun had shone on her handsome face. Now it glinted on his dark hair and bright presence; her dark eyes shot quick glances there too! "When they all shouted, and were pleased and joyous, glad that I had won . . . yet, you did not care?"

"I did, Roeland!" Her voice sounded low and sweet, and her eyes fell on the ground.

"How much? nay, I know. Just enough to smile and say, 'Good: it is well that he should win.' Just enough because I am your friend, to clap your hands you know not why, to laugh you know not why. We men toil,

and you smile—Adrian, Roeland, Jan, or Randolph : all alike—is it not so ?"

" Not Jan, really."

" No ?" exclaimed he, sarcastically. " Not poor Jan. The old boer may go. With him smiles count less."

" What do you mean, Roeland ? Did you not see I was glad. Did I act so well ?"

" I am not fond of acting."

" What ! Am I to call aloud, then ? Oh you foreigners ! you are so silly. You would have us wear our hearts outside—when your vanity or your credit is at stake, that is. Am I to say what my heart tells me,—' Roeland must win. Only Roeland.' Shall I ?"

He took her hand again.

" Lisa's hand is smaller than mine."

" I think it is," said he gravely, and loosed it.

It was a bad move : Clara felt nervous.

" Randolph's hand is stronger than mine," said he.

" No ; is it so ?" whispered she.

An amused smile played on Roeland's face.

She caught it, and broke the momentary silence.

"Look, Roeland, I am not myself to-day. I do not want to quarrel, but you provoke me. I am not as others, and I cannot help it. You take me, and smile and pray, and bring the influence of your poetry and of your talent round me, and then—I do not see you. You say, 'it is so long.' Well, then, come! I am sick of these stolen meetings. Come to me when you like, and as you like. There is no need to tell you you are welcome."

"I don't care to see you with others."

"You see Lisa with others?"

"Oh, Lisa! Ah, yes, Lisa! But that is different. How you are harping on Lisa to-day. Clara, don't you know the sun doesn't shine for me when you are not there? I must have your voice, your wit. Clara, you talk of my talent. Heavens! I am nothing. But there is no one on earth I do admire as I do you."

"Is that true?"

"Quite."

Admiring is not loving, thought she quickly. At that moment, she hated her talent, her power even; if she could be more as others, as Lisa! and if Roeland would kneel at her feet.

But that he never did. It was a contest, not unevenly matched, and as exciting as all equal contests are.

"You are not as others, as you say, Clara. You are hard, cruel, sometimes, and then—I do not love you."

"Roeland!"

"To-day I watched you—I do not understand. You English are different from us."

"And yet you knew I should come?"

"Yes." And he nodded his head as he might have done to a peasant girl, for with all his sweet words, and through all the excitement of the quarrels they had, he knew his power, and he knew that the woman would follow him whithersoever he wished. "I knew you would come."

"I will go now, Roeland. You do not want me any more."

"No, you will not go. There are snow-drifts, coldness, and restlessness all about my life, Clara. You can give me peace. You can understand. They tell me, a friend whom I honour tells me, to live—to work, to try to do something for my fellow men—to make a career."

"Lisa tells you that," said she quietly, and he did not deny it.

Quick as lightning the thought flashed through her, "He is clever, but idle; minister to his nature, and he is mine."

"It is folly; all moonshine and vain talk," said she aloud. "Believe me, I have heard all that so often in England. Men dream, and hope, and aspire; they suffer, do nothing, and die. The most they do is to make enemies and win contempt. Live here, where you are honoured and beloved, cultivate your estate, care for your cottagers, and be at rest."

"And will that satisfy?"

"Not at first. Soon."

"When all aspiration is dulled and all good dreams forgotten," said he sullenly.

"Nay; then I cannot help you. But seriously, are public contentions and political strife the only havens you know? Where are your books and old studies? is Art forgotten? is your home, even thus beautified, nothing to you?"

"I have heard that the voice of a true friend is the voice of the second conscience, that God gives us when we have destroyed our first."

"But you and I have our first, dear Roeland. Good practical sound instruments, I hope."

"Say that again. What did you say?"

"Nothing. I am going. Find peace. Roeland, and when you cannot, come to me at home. There we are never lonely or dull. There you will find it. Moreover, I will not come out here thus again. Have I done you good?"

"Not yet, not yet; stay longer."

"The *hard-driver* is impatient. Take him home."

"Are we friends, Clara? Say, the same as ever? You are not jealous any longer?"

"No," said she, for there was no time to calculate her words.

"Your English word 'home' is very sweet. I like it. It gives one rest. Will you say it to me sometimes when I—— may I come to you when I want it? will you be my—— home?"

She looked at him, doubtful and uncertain. She must not compromise herself. If he did not mean to marry her, she must marry some one else. But then there he was, eager and excited, just waiting for a word, and she loved this man more than she would ever be likely to love any one else in this weary world. For once, let her be true; as true as she could.

"Yes, I will," she said, and smiled up into his eyes.

In an instant both her hands were in his,

and his lips were bent down to them. It was a light chivalrous kiss.

"Ah, now! it is well. I am brave and strong. I can rest. You may go now, if you will."

It was not satisfactory, hardly encouraging.

Clara smiled; a haughty, vague, Platonic sort of smile, and gathering her reins in her hand, touched her ponies with the whip and went.

After passing Randolph and Travers, she met her servant, and at home her mother stood at the hall door in a fright.

"How late you are, Clary; how was it?"

"Baron Roeland kept me, mother," said she, with her head in the air; though at the same time she wondered to herself how long it would be before she would have to drop it low.

"Oh! my dear, I see," and the good woman's hopes rose high. They were the dearest hopes she had in life. "Hush! my dear Tom, say nothing," she added to her husband, who crossed the hall in a fuss, eager

to know what had been the matter. "It was Baron Roeland's fault."

Mr. Vincent rubbed his hands and said nothing.

He had been waiting all his life for the Fates to send him crumbs from the tables of the prosperous. Was one coming to him now? He never thought Clara cared—perhaps Roeland did. If so, he must be a fool. But anyhow, if such a son-in-law came to him, he should think himself fortunate, and would spare no pains from the very next moment to smoothe the way for him.

Clara must not be scolded for being late. She had, in fact, been working hard for the family glory while he was dozing over the fire. Mediocrity often thus prevents men from reaching the heights of moral life as well as those of social position. The goals must be gained; and the number of scruples we can afford to indulge must greatly depend on the amount of our incomes.

Vincent had learnt that so well, that now, although a minutely religious man, and strictly

conscientious about the performance of his duty towards Randolph, and towards all those who were beneath him, although most punctilious, too, about his own work, yet, on many minor points of daily life, he had forgotten to have scruples at all.

CHAPTER IV.

"Let me have men about me, that are fat;
Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights;
Yond' Cassius has a lean and hungry look;
He thinks too much: such men are dangerous."

JULIUS CÆSAR.

IS celebrity an advantage?

If so, Mrs. Lord was a fortunate woman, for suddenly, without any toil or trouble on her part, it had come to her. Only a few days had passed since her father's death, and before that she had not been very much considered, save as being a quiet cheerful little woman, and as one of the many sailors' wives who are eking out a life-time in silent faithful waiting. But now all was changed. Hardly an hour passed, not

one person met another, without her name being mentioned. She was a famous woman.

Thus: Doctor Saltichus had been to see her. Not once or twice, you know, but more than that. Now, Jane Lord was not ill; not the least in the world.

Why did Doctor Saltichus come?

Doctor Saltichus was himself a mystery, had always been an enigma, a riddle, a living Sphinx, and had been called all these epithets in turn by nearly everyone who knew what an enigma, a riddle, or a Sphinx meant: and now Mrs. Lord, who was a most commonplace woman, suddenly became a mysterious woman, without the least right (Franewyk, and Ryssenwyk also, were sure of that), and came in also for all those great epithets.

Franewyk and Ryssenwyk were very angry.

Doctor Saltichus, was a different case. He was a mystery, and they could not help it: at first they had rebelled even against his claim, had peered here, poked there, spied out this,

questioned that—but now two months had passed away since his advent, and no reward had they had for their trouble. They had even begun to bear the seemingly inevitable burden without murmuring. But now it was taking an intolerable form. To have commonplace Jane Lord set up over their heads in this way was too much; they struck at once, their rage smouldered dangerously, and they fumbled about in the darkness of their ignorance all the more angrily that they saw no hope of enlightenment.

No one, not even George Randolph who knew nearly everything, could understand Doctor Saltichus. No one knew where he came from, except from America, but that is much larger than even the whole of Holland; nor did anyone know why he had come. Once he had been heard to say in jest, that his star had guided him to them—but that was rubbish: stars did not do that now-a-days, and the only star that had ever guided anyone had gone the other way, from the East to the West. You could not go and re-

verse the order of things in that way. Who had ever been directed to go East from the West for personal advantage? and if he thinks he is one of some Magi," ended up Mr. Vincent angrily, for it was he who had been airing these sentiments, "I am sure I should like to see his treasures—either mental or more substantial."

"I come here to find them," had said Saltichus, to whom this speech had been repeated, as a feeling question.

Now this answer was curious.

It was tossed about for days, even reproduced, like bread cast upon the waters and found again, after many weeks; nay! at the end of a year it was even remembered and fished up again.

What comments there were upon it!

Had he come to them for fame? was there some precious elixir of life, some mineral or some salt spring near Franewyk which should give strength, health, and long life to others—wealth to himself? Had he some wonderful cure for Dutch fever, for ague or rheumatism

which should operate effectually here in this particular latitude and longitude, should give him a world-wide publicity now, and fame to his posterity for ever after him? Or were the Dutch in his opinion more advanced than other people—could he learn more in Holland, operate more boldly, more successfully, than in other countries, or were they, in his dreams, more liberal? did he think fees would flow in more generously, and empty words command golden sovereigns more despotically here than in other places? Ah! a mere dream! Poor man, if that were it, he would have gone away again before this.

Now, to tell the truth, Doctor Saltichus had spoken that sentence in utter thoughtlessness and without one moment's hesitation, and would have been as alarmed as surprised if he had known its weight to some people, or how it would be twisted and turned into a thousand meanings, and how reproduced again in future years for his edification.

Or, and at length this came to be the more

generally received proposition, had he left America under a cloud? A great hideous black cloud stretching from one end of the Continent to the other, raised by some crime of his committing; some error of judgment, perhaps, which in his profession had ended disastrously, for, to look at him, he did not seem criminally inclined. If this were so, why, poor man! that explained it. He would naturally leave a great country, to him thus rampant with danger, and would naturally seek the smallest country and smallest field for his talents that he could find. (They were forced to give him the wide area of the whole of America for the committal of his supposed crime, from the unpardonable neglect on his part of not having particularized any spot to them where he had resided.) So, when any new-comer asked about him, the general answer came to be, with a sort of grave, responsible, rather charitable cast of countenance:

"Ah! Our doctor, lately come from America! Saltichus is his name. Curious,

isn't it? We don't know much about him. Came here rather under a cloud, poor young man! but very clever, oh! very clever!"

This was a tribute-offering of sacrifice made by the better minded of the population, to appease their consciences for the harm they did him by their unreasonable spite for being a mystery. Naturally to him as far as his patients were concerned, the concluding adjective was sufficient propitiation. Men want brains not morals in a doctor.

The worst of it was, he was not bad-looking. Aquiline features, complexion rather bronzed, dark hair parted down the middle and curling at the ends, and very good eyes. Eyes that could laugh and could be tender—just as they could be very cold, stern, and preternaturally grave. Moreover, he was tall, well-proportioned, and had good gentleman-like hands.

Some of his patients were afraid of him—no wonder! who would not be afraid of a mystery, who would never allow anyone to take a liberty with him?

Then, too, his ways were so mysterious.

All the other doctors whom everyone had ever known in the neighbourhood, had been content with part of a house. Three rooms were the utmost, for in this part of the world houses were still scarce, and the influx of humanity brought thither by the reclamation works and harbour, &c., had made dwelling-places very dear. Three rooms were the very utmost that any doctor had ever had there—a sitting-room and bed-room for himself, with a sort of office, laboratory, receiving-room, or enlarged medicine chest, with bottles on shelves all round it, for patients, had constituted the whole.

Now, Doctor Saltichus would have a house; he had had to wait for it, but for all that, ultimately he got it. And some few had penetrated inside that house, and found, not squalid economy, as hard-working doctors might do well to practise, but luxury. Handsome furniture, handsomely bound books, and prints that did one's eyes good to

look at. The man had taste; it was another blow.

Then too, he *was* not as other people; it was no use trying to think he was. Give up the past, agree to let it be a bygone and a closed book, agree to forgive it, *whatever it was* (there was generosity!), and turn over a new leaf with him. Imagine you have the material for the making of a friend, of a companion, of a man of taste and letters—one will work material many ways and turn it over several times to find companions and congenial spirits in exile—yet always something was sure to check it all. Suddenly he would be cold, silent, absent; suddenly his eyes, that had seemed to be lighted with intense interest, with the fire of genius, friendship or inspiration, would all at once be fixed on some far-off point—on the ceiling, on the horizon—and you would see his mind was there too. You would turn hastily to look—but you would find nothing. It was irritating.

Then, too, it was found that he took long walks by himself—not long in point of

distance, for he would go up and down, up and down, over the same ground a thousand times—but long in point of time. After gloaming, when the dew was rising and black shadows were creeping over everything, his old housekeeper would watch his solitary figure out there in the pasture lands—moving up and down, up and down, and it seemed to her weird and uncanny. She did not like it, but she was not so angry about it as some people were. Some people went so far as to say that he held odd instruments in his hands, and set up strange tabernacles when the sun had gone down.

Travers did think he had caught him surveying once. Certainly he had a piece of paper in one hand, but Randolph thought he was taking the latitude of Franewyk, and felt strangely nervous as he said it, for fear Saltichus should be going to build a harbour somewhere else, on the new and universally acknowledged wonderful principles that Randolph had invented.

Jane Lord was an innocent, well-meaning

little woman. Vain perhaps, weak perhaps, but that is understood, is it not? under the head, woman. Just now she was feeling important with her grief, but except for that, she was almost as commonplace as all her neighbours around her. Her father had been a great man at the works, Mr. Randolph's right hand, and the head appealed to both as regards work and wages by the men. Since his death, nearly every English man and woman had come, some to condole with her, some to ask questions, and Mr. Randolph himself had frequently been to her for aid about names and men with whom he had not before been brought in personal contact. Latterly, too, Dr. Saltichus had been.

Her brother, Jack Meadows, was away at the office all day; he was a sort of clerk. Her child was at school. There was no one to interfere with her.

"Has Doctor Saltichus been here, Jane?" asked Jack of her one evening, when the news of these frequent visits first reached him.

"Yes, he has," said she, with a little vain

toss of her head, as though she knew her conversation was pleasant to her visitor.

"What did he come about?"

"Just to be kind, I suppose, since I am alone, and poor father is gone."

"Oh!"

Another time it was:

"Hasn't Doctor Saltichus been *again*, Jane?"

"Yes; he has."

"What did he come about?"

"Well, why shouldn't he?"

Another time:

"What did he say?"

"Nothing much."

Another time:

"Does he come to talk to you?"

"No; he makes me talk, and sits there listening. He's a kind gentleman. I say, Jack, the others are mighty curious, ain't they?"

In truth, as she herself afterwards confided to her brother, she knew no more than any one else. It was a mystery to her why he

came. She talked, certainly, to fill up the time, but she could not honestly suppose that her weary complainings about her father's death and her husband's long absence interested him much.

Lisa van Hovenaar, who was continually in and out of the cottages there, was one day next door when Doctor Saltichus drove up to Mrs. Lord's and went in.

"I think she must be ill," said she to the old woman, "only that she does not like to say so. It is very unaccountable: if she isn't, why does he go?"

"Ill, ma'am? she's no more ill than I am. Hearty enough she is. My mother was a nurse, so I knows."

"Was she?" said the sympathizing Lisa.

"Yes; my father was killed at the battle of Baddyjoss—maybe you have read about that; it was before the battle of Waterloo. Well, he was killed, mother never married after that. But she took to nursing, and was mighty much liked. She was bespoken by

seven people the night she died, but she couldn't go to none of them, so they buried her handsome, that they did."

During the old woman's speech, Lisa had been gathering up her courage for a grand stroke. She would go in to Mrs. Lord's while Doctor Saltichus was there, and see what he did come for.

Giving herself no time to think, she wished her old friend good-bye, and went.

Mrs. Lord was sitting on one side of the fire and Doctor Saltichus on the other; not comfortably, but just as a recent arrival, a clergyman, a tract-distributor, or any unwelcome adviser does sit; rather on the edge of his chair, and spreading out his hands to the fire to seem at ease.

Lisa, standing with the latch in her hand, took this in, and felt disappointed.

At the bright apparition, the doctor and Jane Lord jumped up.

"Don't move, don't disturb yourselves. I beg your pardon, Doctor Saltichus, shall I come some other time?"

Lisa felt something of a hypocrite, and blushed brightly.

"No, miss! pray come in, miss!" said Jane, bustling about to get her a chair, while Doctor Saltichus stood offering his.

Then she sat down between the two. It was all the work of an instant, but yet, as she came to an anchor between these two fancied conspirators, she had time to feel nervous and frightened.

"I have never been to see you, Mrs. Lord, since your dreadful loss. What a night that was! I have been so sorry for you."

"Oh! I know you have, miss. I know—and every one has been so kind—Doctor Saltichus, too."

"It was so sudden and so shocking," said he, gently.

"You have been very kind to Mrs. Lord, Doctor Saltichus," said Lisa, turning her bright eyes full upon him.

He flushed awkwardly.

"Ah! that he has. And it isn't deeds only, miss—it's words, it's looks, it's interest."

He softly disclaimed doing anything more than one is bound to do by the ties of nature for any fellow creature who is in sorrow.

"What were you saying, Mrs. Lord, when I came in?"

A brave question, considering how mysterious every one thought it. Mrs. Lord, who knew how suspiciously she was regarded just now, thought it very brave indeed.

"She was telling me about her husband leaving her."

"Tell me," said Lisa, drawing her chair nearer to the fire between them both.

"La, miss! it's nothing to tell. Nothing different to what many a poor woman has to tell. Only my grief was keener in those days, for I could never tell it. Father never liked to hear me whimpering about and saying it was time for John to come back. You see, miss, it's just that. The order comes, and there he must go. It's no good being sick or sorry; it's no good saying you can't spare him. And the days may seem never so long, never so weary, you may call to the

sea, but it only plays with you and mocks you; nothing's no good till the time's up, the voyage done, and then he'll be back for a while."

"It must be very hard," said Lisa.

"You have a good stout heart," said Saltichus restlessly; "that bears you up, doesn't it?"

"It's no good being wicked—not in any way. It don't make the time go any quicker, and it only dims the brightness of your sight when your man comes back."

"The sea will bear him safely, Mrs. Lord."

"Yes, sir! I believe in the sea. It plays us false tricks sometimes, as the other night, but not our absent ones, sir. They will come back all safe!"

"God's voice rules the storm, and His hand shelters those we love," said Lisa.

As for Saltichus, he had pushed his chair back, and was walking up and down the little room with his hands in his pockets, and with the quick restless gestures that had been remarked so much.

"Look, Mrs. Lord!" said he, suddenly coming to a standstill behind the two women as they sat over the fire: "you are right. Let me tell you what I went through once. I lived on the seashore, and there was a storm. Some one I cared for was out in it. I knew that, because they were coming home and I expected them. I believed in the sea and in God then as you do now. Go on, you are right. It was all dreadful, terrible. You know it—how it keeps you awake at night, how the wind seems to go through you, and the waves seem to bruise you in their might. I prayed—no one knows how I prayed—they would laugh if they did—that there might be no wreck, that they might ride safely on the storm. I prayed and I laughed alternately—my agony was intense. The wind went down, and the waves were sullen in their enforced silence—the ship came home. They were safe. But notwithstanding all that—I was wrecked! It was all over—I had been deceived—I had no more life or happiness—God and the elements had heard me, but the

one I cared for was pitiless and had made a wreck of me. That was shipwreck. Since then, I have believed in the sea, yes! but in mankind, no! You two pure women preserve your faith in all."

"It is hard to doubt all for the sake of one," said Lisa meekly.

She looked up. George Randolph stood there.

"How d'ye do, Saltichus! Good evening, Mrs. Lord! Here so late, Miss Van Hovenaar!" There was displeasure in his tone.

"Is it late?" asked she, and sprang up to go.

"Stay a moment; I will see you home."

"He often speaks so!" said Jane Lord in a low voice to Lisa, when Saltichus had gone.

"Poor man! he must have had some sorrow!"

Jane smiled at her kindly as she left. All the people knew the beautiful girl liked George Randolph. What a long time he was making up his mind! "Perhaps this very afternoon as they walked along together they would settle it," thought Jane as she shut the door when they were out of sight.

CHAPTER V.

"And she hath smiles to earth unknown,
Smiles, that with motion of their own
Do spread and sink and rise;
That come and go with endless play,
And ever as they pass away
Are hidden in her eyes."

WORDSWORTH.

"DOCTOR SALTICHUS is a very strange man," said Lisa to George as she walked beside him.

"Heavens! don't I know that yet?"

She laughed.

"There is much more depth in him than you think. Much feeling, I believe. I like him immensely."

"Why?"

"He has had some great trouble."

"Does that make him nice?"

"Let me think. No! But it makes me sorry for him. It makes him bitter. He has been deceived by some one, and that is dreadful."

"That happens to all of us every day."

"I hope not—not from people we are fond of!"

"Yes, child—it does."

"Has it ever happened to you?"

"I cannot answer—I do not know—I dare say it will."

"And then you will come to me to comfort you?"

He was silent. He had been feeling a brute all day, and here was this sweet girl spending kind words on him, however rough he might be to her.

"I do not deserve that," said he.

"I thought I was your friend!"

"You are good," said he.

Indeed she was! Later, as he went home alone, having left her at her gate, he struck

his heel angrily into the soft soil. Her quiet patient face and tender smile rose before him, and he knew that he was not man enough to take them to him.

He acknowledged her worth, nay! more her wealth—he knew peace and prosperity would be his, if he could put out his hand and speak the word. But he could not.

"Lisa! Dear Lisa! Sweet Lisa!" said he in his heart; but that was all.

Some one else had him in her toils.

If he had known her, her love, her sweetness, her goodness, even then he might not have been vanquished. Some things—caprice, fashion, tinsel, passion, win us, oh! so lightly. Merit, even beauty, sometimes never touch us.

Lisa, living a solitary quiet life, spent in looking after her mother the Baroness Van Hovenaar, who was blind and infirm now, and in ministering to those about her, had set herself an ideal which would have astonished George Randolph.

Use—result—progress—success—was his ideal of life.

Self-sacrifice, hers. She was almost an ascetic in her manifold acts of self-denial, almost a saint in the life she set herself to lead. Whatever she saw to be done for any one else's good, that she must do; however disagreeable, difficult, onerous, compromising, yet never mind! was she not put into the world for some purpose?—Surely God meant her to do it! Pleasure went for nothing; she thought it necessary for some people—not for her. How was she to get to heaven, or show any one else the way there, if she did not do disagreeable things? Let them come in a pile. The more the better. It was another victory achieved. Another fragment laid down towards the building of that House Beautiful, which God would require her soul to be, to fit it for the temple of His spirit.

There was only one thing she could not give up. Only one blot on the fair scutcheon of her soul. Her love for George Randolph. And that she had taken to God, and had so prayed over it, had so dreamed over it, had

so wept over it, that to her, poor child! it seemed almost part of her religion.

She had heard him so praised by his English people, so admired and well-spoken of by her Dutch friends; he was considered so clever, so reliable; she herself had seen so much of his energy and talent—to her it seemed sacrilege not to love him. In her eyes, too, he was making her country. Adding wealth and prosperity to Roeland and to them all by the broad acres he had reclaimed from the sea. Out of the deep he had made the dry land appear. Why, there, where the cows with their black legs and white saddles were feeding, the silver waves used to flow.

To her, George Randolph was a wonderfully great man; it was one of her Articles of Faith to love him. Sometimes Roeland had sowed seeds of doubt in her clear mind, and then she had lifted her blue eyes to his, and the tears had gathered there, as she had called him cruel. But she was too young to doubt really. George was always kind. He

had made love to her first, and now she must be true always; he was too busy to be always making silly love speeches. She was content to wait: she was too earnest, too true herself, ever to imagine that any one else could say what they did not mean, or having once meant it, could change and forget it.

That evening, after George had left her, when she sat reading aloud to her blind mother, the words had little meaning for her. She was musing on his short answers and absent manner. What had she done? had he been displeased to find her in the marked cottage with Doctor Saltichus?

She read on, and her mother listened with a smile on her face, working steadily at some sort of white worsted work with large knitting needles, that Lisa's hands had taught her how to use.

Suddenly the house bell rang, and a moment afterwards the Baron van Franckenburg was announced. It was a pretty picture, and it burst upon Roeland, coming from the outer darkness and from the solitude of his

own home, in the full plenitude of its pathos.

The softly-shaded light of the lamp among the flowers on the table beside Lisa, the bright fire, the large white hearth-rug, the flame flickering on the crimson satin furniture, the candles in the delicate Sèvres chandelier, then the patient listening face of the old baroness, with her white hair and gentle expression, her sightless eyes, and Lisa sitting on a low chair close at hand—Roeland stopped impulsively for half a moment, to take in the pretty home-scene.

It is the custom in Holland to pay these evening calls; a custom that Roeland often remembered. Many a pleasant conversation did Roeland and Lisa thus have together, each appearing to advantage. For he was in love with her and tried to shine, bringing out his knowledge or accomplishments at every opportunity, baring his heart to her save in the one particular of his devotion to her—to win her by sympathy; and she was not in love with him, so shone before him by

virtue of simple naïve unaffectedness. With Roeland, Lisa never knew what it was to be reserved; she had known him all her life, and he always understood and was kind. With George Randolph it was different; then she was often silent and nervous. There is generally too much blind reverence for the man of her choice in a girl's heart, for her to be quite candid and out-spoken in his presence.

I said Roeland's only subject of reserve was his devotion. That, because he had learnt her character well now, and knew that she would not listen to him yet. For ever putting himself forward, as a weaker man might have done, thinking continual advances must make way, would only weary Lisa he knew, might perhaps make her hate him. There was intense admiration, almost worship in his love; it was just one of those loves which high natures feel once in their lives and never know again.

Now, as he walked across the room towards her, he wondered whether he should be able

to refrain from speaking some word to-night.

"This is kind of you, Roeland," said the Baroness, with a smile, as she heard him approaching, and putting out her hand for him to take. "Very kind of you."

"How do you do, Roeland?" and Lisa closed the book, and drew a chair towards the fire for him.

"I could not stand it any longer. I had done all my letters and things."

"Even your cigars?" put in Lisa, maliciously.

"I have them always, you know; so, like the poor whom we have always with us also, I do not care so much about them, and I thought you would let me come and sit with you for half an hour."

"It reminds me of the old days," said Madame van Hovenaar, "when I first married, and your father used to come over to talk for 'just half an hour,' as he said. He usually brought some clever political friend with him, and we used to have fine discussions."

"How did they end generally?" asked Roeland, standing on the hearthrug with his back to the fire, and looking down upon Lisa's pretty face.

"Why, generally I think, after our all getting very hot, by the clever friend monopolizing my husband, and your father coming to sit here on my sofa by me."

Instinctively Roeland stepped to her sofa and sat down by her: it was like his affectionate impulsive nature. There had been a plaintive note in her voice as she finished the sentence, which she had begun so merrily, as though now she felt herself forsaken.

"My son! dear Roeland!" said the Baroness, gratefully, and felt about for his hand to thank him better.

He took her fingers in his, and stroked them silently.

"Roeland!" said Lisa suddenly, for she hated everything that reminded her of the darkness ever increasing around her mother; "I saw Doctor Saltichus to-day—I mean to speak to."

"No? Well, what did the wonderful man say? what did you think of him?"

How different from George Randolph! At last she could unburden her mind.

"Well, Roeland," she said seriously, "I cannot make him out at all. I like him immensely, however."

"Where did you meet him?"

"At Mrs. Lord's. I went there to see him."

"Silly Lisa," said her mother.

"And do you know he talked quite wonderfully. I believe he has suffered dreadfully. He talked about a shipwreck as though he felt it. He said how he prayed they might be saved, and that then they were saved, but he was wrecked."

"How? cast on a rock?"

"No; deceived by some one he cared for. And I know he meant that he would much rather they should have died after all, than that he should be taught to doubt in God and goodness."

"Then you think he is an Atheist?"

"Yes; because of that."

"He must be very weak, Lisa."

"Oh, Roeland, you should have heard him! I think, do you know, if any one were mocked and deceived like that, one would doubt. He thinks, you see, that God mocked him—brought them safe to show him how well worth it they were."

"God was only teaching him the hollowness of his earthly idols, then, child," said Madame van Hovenaar.

"But God had let him believe so long?"

"Was not that his own doing, Lisa?" said Roeland. "Don't be unjust. Say there was to be no storm, because they were out; say the woman was to be a saint suddenly, because Doctor Saltichus had chosen to admire her. It is the same thing."

"And he is so good-looking, Roeland," said Lisa, suddenly changing her point, and smiling mischievously.

"That makes him a righteous man at once, I know."

The Baroness smiled.

"It could not with me, Roeland, for I could not see him."

"If he thought God mocked him, Lisa, he did not then doubt God's existence, only God's goodness or charity."

"Yes, perhaps."

"Now I think God rewards us generally according to the wisdom and character of our exertions. If Saltichus pinned his faith on bad seed, it was wrong of him to rail at God for the fruit being rotten."

"In fact God did hear him—did bring them back," resumed she.

"Have you seen Randolph lately?" asked Roeland.

"Yes; to-day."

"How was he?"

"Very busy."

"What do you think of Travers?"

"I like him."

"You like everybody," laughed her mother.

"Mr. Travers seems to me to be an artist, a gentleman, an idealist, with an uncomfortable weight of necessary work dragging him

down, and from which he cannot escape, therefore he pretends to like it ; but he bears his burden quite differently from everybody else."

"He seems to have a great opinion of Randolph."

"Naturally," said Lisa, and her mother flushed uncomfortably.

"Take me to the piano, child, I want to play," said the Baroness.

Roeland led her to it, stood there a little while listening to her sweet murmuring melodies, then, softened, and with the music in his soul, came back to Lisa.

"Adrian was with me to-day. He said that he thinks that Randolph is deteriorating."

"It is not true ; he is the same as ever. I hate that Count van Bruynesteyn. You know it, Roeland, and yet you will always talk about him."

"He does not hate you, at all events."

"I am not so sure of that."

"Why, he wants to marry you."

"I know, but he thinks I am rich. That is why."

Roeland laughed.

"It is mean and horrible. A man who marries a woman for money is a despicable wretch: I think nothing is too bad. I am seldom inclined to flirt, but I have often felt with him that I should like to lead him a pretty dance; and then at the end how I would laugh at him! Shall I do it, Roeland?"

Then Roeland sat down beside her.

"I think it would be a pity, Lisa. You would lose dignity. Now you are perfection. I think I should be sorry to see that. You need not speak to him, you know."

"Then I will not do it, Roeland. It would be wicked, as you say. No need to do wrong because other people do it. But he is so conceited. He will not believe that I do not admire him, Roeland."

"Leave the puppy alone. I am sick of him," he rose angrily; angry with himself, with Lisa, with Adrian, for taking up so

much talk and wasting the precious moments thus, that he had to spend with her.

The soft notes of the piano fell with silvery cadence into his soul.

"Come, be tamed, Roeland," said Lisa.

She was not clever, not talented; that is, not even able to hold her own in the high-flown conversations he often loved to have with her, but she had a woman's penetration to know how to sympathize and thereby to bring peace to a troubled spirit. High thoughts and high aspirations too she had, though fit expression for them failed her, but Roeland sometimes seized and brought them out into the light.

"Well! Lisa, tame me!"

"What shall I say to you?" and she leaned back in her chair looking up at him with laughing eyes and a face all the prettier from the fire-light flickering on it. "Shall I tell you to cease that eternal troubling that you love so much, to cease being weary, and to be at rest? Must difficult problems for ever torment you? Will the mysteries of

life and death worry you till the Judgment Day?"

"I suppose so!" said he. "Do you think it will be here soon?

"The Judgment Day do you mean?" asked she surprised.

He nodded.

"I wish it would," said she. "Roeland, I don't much think we *shall* be caught up in the air: that sounds so impossible! What do you think?"

He became serious.

"I hardly know. I think though that it will come upon us very gradually—so gradually that it's coming will be like that of a thief in the night, as we are told it will be. Creation was slow—why should not destruction be slow also?"

"When I was a child I used to think it would be here directly. It would be much nicer never to die, but to be taken before that great white throne with everyone else now, and then pass on to Heaven straight."

"You used to expect it so, did you?"

"Yes! I remember so well coming in one day from my garden with my rake and my spade over my shoulder, and I was all covered with mud and mould—and I remember looking down at my frock and thinking. If this is the Judgment Day and if I meet God there at the hall-door on His great throne, and all the people round Him, I shall be ashamed of myself, and it will be dreadful. I wonder if I shall be allowed to change my dress first!"

"That was unpardonable vanity, Lisa!" said Roeland.

"No! it wasn't! I hated dress, and was always being scolded for untidiness. That was why!"

She looked very pretty, very childlike, chattering away so simply. Roeland looked away from her, and began to lose himself in vain conjecture.

"Your faith and your peace are very beautiful, Lisa! give me some of them. For my part, I hardly believe in death. I think life

goes on for ever, at least that feeling and idea, which in fact are life, go on always, only that they become intensified and strengthened, and, if we go to heaven, are purified and elevated."

"Therefore we should be careful about our lives here—the seeds of our eternal immortality you would call them!"

"Yes; that is why I call nearly every worldly career false and vain!"

"A man can raise his work, I suppose, Roeland."

"Perhaps! But there is so much trifling, so much falsehood, so many dragging weights on every honest man's leg, that it is very disgusting! Look at politics!"

"Look at George Randolph! He is honest!"

"That is different! I think if I could be a poet, or a painter and might say all I liked and felt *as I liked*, I might manage to be happy!"

"That would not help your country. You

should try to live for that, I think: not for yourself!"

"I should be a continual discord. My wishes would go in one direction. The objects I should have to strive for would be in the other."

"You could do so much good, Roeland, if you liked. You have a start that few others have. You could easily step into your father's place, and you have had plenty of preparation to fill it well. You know enough of the feelings of those who would be round you, to penetrate to their wishes and objects. To improve people you must know them."

"But I should condemn so strongly, I should stand alone!"

"Are you afraid, Roeland?"

She said it with a little grimace of contempt.

"Not if you were by my side!" said he hotly. "Then I would do anything—brave anything. Dear Lisa, a truce to this! I have been silent a long time. Answer me now."

"I answered you at Franewyk the other day, I thought, Roeland."

"No; you did not; you shirked the question, Lisa. I cannot help it, you look so lovely to-night; and," added he apologetically, "we have had so much of grave subjects for so many months!"

"Isn't this a grave subject?" asked Lisa smiling at him and blushing.

"Yes, Lisa! oh! the gravest in the world. Just say yes! and then we can dismiss it also for ever so long if you like."

"Dear old Roeland, hear me . . . ."

"No; I won't—unless you begin by yes—"

"I can't, Roeland; listen to me."

"No!"

"Wait! you do not think. . . . ."

Roeland bent over her: his eager face was very near to hers.

"Dear Lisa, I have waited. Dear Lisa, the Judgment Day will be here, the muddy frock will be on, and you and I will be waiting still, before you have made up your mind; say the word, child!"

He stood imperious, there: his old dictatorial manner that she knew so well.

"Miss Vincent!" said the servant in a loud voice, and admitted her.

CHAPTER VI.

"*Boats.* You mar our labour! keep your cabins: you do assist the storm.

"*Gon.* Nay good, be patient.

"*Boats.* When the sea is.

"*Gon.* Good: yet remember whom thou hast aboard.

"*Boats.* None that I more love than myself. You are a counsellor; if you can command these elements to silence, and work the peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more; use your authority. If you cannot, give thanks you have lived so long, and make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it so hap. Cheerly, good hearts! Out of the way I say. [*Exit.*

"*Gon.* I have great comfort from this fellow; methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him."

TEMPEST.

IF we could only see things as other people see them! If we could be at once actor and calm spectator! If the hidden springs as well as the resulting

motion were visible to us, how much more powerful should we be! For instance, now, here the Directors, Contractors, and Chief Engineers of these wonderful works are sitting together in deep conclave, and if one of them could rise above the moment, and look down impartially into the mind of each man, how doubly great would be his influence! But there is no time for that! Atoms make the world, and men make a company! Members make the man, and each man plays his part in the Drama of Life—the moral of his work is often never unrolled till it is time for his exit from the stage.

Randolph, with his deep-set eyes, handsome face, and mind at work on every possibility at once—Mr. Vincent, burly, good-looking, always ready for a joke, but shrewd and combative in manner; Mr. Bradlaw, with iron gray hair, tall, well-proportioned body, square of brow, face, and shoulder, with an eternal smile and oily manner; Mr. Bennett, shorter than his partner, longer nosed, keener eyed, less hair, and not adorned with the

glories of diamond pin, heavy rings, or gold lockets, such as Mr. Bradlaw enjoys; Heer Van der Pyl, short, broad, square, with fair hair, blue eyes, and the courteous manner of the foreigner; which, although he is Dutch, is yet softer than that of our English middling class; Heer Van Naarden, the Representative of the Dutch government; his clerk, who is suffering acutely from an attack of influenza, and who does nothing but apply his handkerchief to his small detective-like grey eyes; Guy Travers, listening and looking on, hazarding but few words, smiling with a sort of amused aristocratic loftiness, and you have the meeting. Perhaps, saying nothing, Travers said more than anyone else. Certainly, in that hour he learnt to admire George Randolph more than ever before.

They sat round a large mahogany table that was covered with papers and plans; the walls of the room were hung with maps, save where the well-filled book-shelves took up the space; two large windows let in plenty of light, and with it a vista on one side of sea

waves dancing and rippling in the sunshine, and on the other, of huge blocks of stone;—the material used for the building of the piers that formed the harbour. This was the outlook from that house by the sea, that served at once as the office and as the home of Randolph and Travers while the work should keep them in Holland.

Mr. Bradlaw was sitting down, eager, self-satisfied. He had delivered his oration, and he was waiting for Randolph's answer. He had expressed dissatisfaction at the expense incurred, at the small progress made, and had hinted ideas for reduction of the wages hitherto given to English workmen. He had been the spokesman for Mr. Bennett and himself, and he was well-pleased with his words. Usually he made Bennett say all the disagreeable things.

George Randolph started to his feet, and dissented from Mr. Bradlaw *in toto*. He explained, as far as he could make Messrs. Bradlaw and Bennett and Heer Van Naarden understand with their limited intelligences,

the naturally slow progress of the work, and he refused point-blank, saying he should prefer to give up the appointment, to make any reduction in his men's wages. Had not they too sacrificed—as he had—home, country, and family for the sake of the work, and now, was the work to be false to them? (Heer Van der Pyl was with him and signified his full approval of his words.) Some of them had indeed brought their families; but did not their families then suffer too thereby? Must it not be made up to them in some degree? Was country nothing? were friends nothing? True! Holland is not an antipodes to England, but anyhow a gulf does flow between, and be the distance large or small it makes little difference to a man when his work ties him by the leg and he cannot traverse it! Were Mr. Bradlaw and Mr. Bennett human, that they could expect Englishmen who were worth anything to come and risk health in this country of low fever and ague for nothing? Moreover, the work was not light; weak men could not do

it; nor, for a great deal of it, would careless or ignorant workmen suffice. Had not good English hands a right to good pay?

Mr. Bradlaw made a motion to retreat, Mr. Bennett looked hurt, and Heer Van Naarden nodded his head and said, "Ja, mijn vriend, you are right—right—I zee!"

Of course, went on Randolph hurriedly, if Mr. Bradlaw and Mr. Bennett wished they could send an appeal to government for some convicts, or for Irishmen, or for any workmen of lower stamp, who were wanted to be got rid of out of England, and pay them less; but the work would probably progress more slowly than ever, extra expense would be incurred by the waste of time, and the whole standard of the English Colony, on which, he, Randolph, had spent some thought and pains, at present occupied on the Reclamation of Maeslem Meer, the canal, the pier, and the works attendant, would be infallibly lowered. Yet—of course that was not his affair; perhaps he had been meddling and occupy-

ing himself unnecessarily. They could do as they liked!

And then George Randolph held his tongue, feeling that he had lost his temper, and that his love for his workmen had carried him away, feeling, too, that for once in his life he had let his contempt for the meanness and ignorance of his comrades show itself too transparently; feeling, too, more than ever, that the shackles which bound him down were very hard to bear, that disasters wrought by the sea, and co-operation wrung out in this way for means to combat them, made his life a difficult one.

"Perhaps Mr. Bradlaw hardly knows how much we have to contend against just now!" said Travers.

And then Van der Pyl made a short speech, explaining their late catastrophe, the loss of their foreman, and the dangerous nature of the work to the men's health.

A Dutchman loves his guilders: if Van der Pyl thought they could not give less, why! thought Bennett, perhaps they couldn't!

Meanwhile George Randolph waited impatiently, and with his head in the air, for the answer, divided in thought and wondering whether he and his workmen would get dismissal to be replaced by convicts, whether he would be reproved, or whether the new scheme which he had submitted to the approval of his chiefs at the last meeting would gain assent.

There was a discussion, lasting a few moments, between the partners, and then Mr. Bradlaw rising, said, that he could not help thinking that his worthy friend Randolph had misjudged them a little; that they knew their welfare was as safe as it could be in his hands; that perhaps he would excuse them if they said they considered him a little hasty in his expressions to-day, but that they begged him to be reassured, and to continue in his praiseworthy, persevering and intelligent line of conduct as hitherto. He—Mr. Bradlaw—knew his good friend had much to contend with, much to ruffle him; perhaps to-day some new difficulty had beset him: he, for

one, had never noticed these storms. He, for one, only begged to thank Randolph for the way he had always studied their joint interests."

"Yes; if we die famous men," put in Vincent, "it will be thanks to you, Randolph!"

Mr. Bradlaw was dreadfully oily to-day; George felt him wriggling like a serpent before his face. You could never be sure of him. He tossed his head, disdaining to apologize, and shoved his hands into his pockets, as he rose again:

"And the plan I submitted?"

"We admire it infinitely!" said Mr. Bradlaw

Randolph made a gesture of impatience.

"And have explained it to Heer Van Naarden," said Mr. Bennett.

"Who will discuss it with the Heer Van Gruyter," said the worthy Dutchman.

"And the answer shall be forwarded to you, my dear Randolph, as soon as possible," said Mr. Bradlaw.

"Thank you! thank you!" said Randolph eagerly, a smile breaking over his face. "That

is all I can expect. Let it be well discussed and thought over before I have an answer. It saves time in the end. I must apologize for any hasty words to-day, but there are storms, as Mr. Bradlaw says, that do stop us, clever as we may be."

"Yes! yes!" said Vincent; "and we don't ride at anchor yet."

"Nor are we in the harbour where we would be."

"Time flies, gentlemen," said Randolph, pulling out his watch; "will you excuse me? You will find luncheon in the other room. You will have plenty of time before the three o'clock train up to Amsterdam!"

They broke up, and Randolph shut himself up in his office.

"Clever young man, that, I do think," said Van Naarden, when he had gone.

"Very!" said Mr. Wardlaw.

"He do turn us all round his fingers!"

"He will make his way!" said Mr. Bennett.

"He is much honoured here and liked," said Van der Pyl.

"Clara might do worse," said Vincent to himself, for it had weighed upon him much of late how fast she was getting *on*, and how slight the chances seemed of her getting *off*.

At that moment, Randolph called Van der Pyl, leaving Travers to do the honours of the luncheon.

"I say, Randolph, my dear fellow," said Mr. Vincent in a hurry, "come and dine to-night, will you?"

"Thank you very much, but I cannot. Dr. Saltichus dines with us."

"Dr. Saltichus!" and every face grew long and ludicrously interested.

"I would have him!" put in Travers, and Randolph laughed.

"Why?" asked Mr. Wardlaw and Mr. Vincent in a breath, who would not have done it for worlds. They piqued themselves too much on their respectability.

"Interests me!" put in Travers laconically.

"Talking of the standard of morals," said Vincent loudly, "I would send away Mrs. Lord

or him from your colony, Randolph, or clear up the mystery some how."

At that moment Jack Meadows, the clerk, passed through the passage.

They all looked annoyed.

"I never attend to gossip," said Randolph, and he went out of the house.

CHAPTER VII.

"*Gra.* You look not well, Signor Antonio :
You have too much respect upon the world ;
They lose it that do buy it with much care.
Believe me, you are marvellously chang'd."

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

DOCTOR SALTICHUS was a strong man; strong in mind and body, stronger in will. Who so well as he could have stood the fearful life of solitude he had been leading lately? Not one friend—very few intelligible patients—not a man to converse with. Distrust can have no true friends; curiosity may put on the guise of sympathy, but if any discovery be achieved it is communicated to the multitude at once. Saltichus had set a gulf betwixt himself and

every one else when he first came, by a lofty independent disdain; he had courted no friendship, he had resented all interference, he had ignored all questions, and now he was too much of a mystery for anyone to care to tread recklessly on the Holy of Holies where he had chosen to enthrone himself.

And he suffered,

Utter abandonment, miserable loneliness, a proud height of forlorn solitude. His spirit often quailed within him; sometimes he actually shuddered when he was alone, longed for any live thing, anything that breathed, bird, cat, even a flower, to be near him, and cried for some human voice of sympathy with such inward agony that sometimes he doubted his health or his sanity.

Then he grew kinder to his patients; his manner softened, especially to the women who were alone all day.

He was only reaping as he had sown. People will not come back at once, when they have been pushed rudely away. The world is not a billiard table, nor are people

balls, that they should rebound as required.

Then he took to going to Mrs. Lord, found himself telling her of his voyage from America —of his waiting there in Amsterdam, where he knew no one, till he could come to Franewyk —of his applying for the vacancy . . . then suddenly he stopped, changed colour, and never told Mrs. Lord any more. But her face had sympathized with him, and he had gone again.

Then that day he met Lisa.

Lisa, with all her beauty and sweetness, and her pretty demure Puritan face of goodness, that had looked terrified when he had ranted about the sea and the storm, now such long years ago. He went home more than half penitent—more than half believing, certainly hating himself.

And since then he had hungered more than ever for some kind intelligent human voice of sympathy. All at once an invitation reached him from the house by the sea to go to dine.

He smiled to himself; he walked up and down the room with it; he laughed aloud. There was Light in the Darkness at last. Now again his tongue could be unloosed; he could be a man, himself again. And then a warning seemed to come to him, but he heeded it not.

"Go I will. I shall not betray myself. Mysteries are popular, but only at a distance: a nearer inspection requires candour and confession. I will affect candour. I will tell them of England, of home. America only shall be a sealed book to them."

Now hatred is shown in a strange manner when it results in a man asking the object of it to dinner. There is hope for us all then. Let us look for ortolans' and plovers' eggs at the tables of our foes, not only of our friends. Who hath no foes, *væ victis* for him!

Guy Travers had seen all sorts of men, both abroad and at home; at Melton and at Rome: in London and in Paris. Own fathers, and no fathers, guardsmen, both impecunious

and wealthy (*O rara avis!*), sportsmen and artists, literary men and turf men: but of all whom he had seen he had never come across any one like Hector Saltichus.

Guy prided himself, you must know, on reading a man in a moment; it was his peculiar talent, he said—but Doctor Saltichus foiled him. He wrestled with himself about him; Randolph found him striking his brow and slapping his knee, and indulging in most uncomplimentary epithets at odd times, and always Saltichus was the object of them. Guy turned and tossed in his bed at night as he studied him, as he remembered traits, changes of expression, sudden surprises; and he always ended by confessing to himself that he could only see him, as it were, in a glass, darkly, and that he knew not at all what manner of man he was. He hated to feel those dark piercing eyes fixed on him, and he always writhed under his impotent ignorance when the glance came.

Guy, poor unhappy Guy, stranded in this way, with only Randolph and work to amuse

him, found the days sometimes dreary enough after his gay life of pleasure, when study had been the pastime, and engineering the intellectual delight of dull days. Now, perhaps, this restless prejudice and intense dislike against Saltichus, that gave him no rest, was an occupation that lightened his misery.

He was quite a different man when he had sent that invitation to dinner, notwithstanding all Randolph's remonstrances, who declared that doctors were not considered at all in society in Holland.

"Hang society," said Guy; and he sat down and wrote a note as though he were at home in England, where friends used to come flocking in answer to his invitations.

"I wonder if he cares what he eats," said Randolph.

"Sorry for him if he does," said Guy, whose sole idea had been to have the man facing him over his port wine, when he thought he should be able to read him through and through. He did not care for him sufficiently to trouble himself about the repast. "I do

hope he will take to his port kindly," added he gravely. "Claret is poor stuff to get a fellow to talk on."

When the time came, Randolph found himself almost as eager as Guy, and laughed, despising his own excitement.

"I tell you what, George," said Travers, when he heard the trolly that was to bring the doctor draw up at the gate, and he came into Randolph's room to tell him so. "'Confidence begets confidence.' We'll tell him all about ourselves, and then we shall draw him."

When Randolph went into the sitting-room, he found the two standing over the fire together, Guy talking volubly, and displaying all the treasures of his mind to attract the mysterious doctor.

Not till the middle of dinner did they all thoroughly warm to each other; not that there were any fortifications of reserve thrown out by Saltichus, who, indeed, seemed as desirous to be sociable as both his hosts, but congenial subjects were at first hard to find,

and it is as difficult for a Mystery as for the mystified to break the ice. Strange to say, Randolph warmed to him soonest, and found means to interest him deeply. Guy looked on, all eyes and ears, jealous, and glowering with some sort of smouldering anger; a false friend, indeed, a true snake in the grass.

They were talking of the harbour.

"It cannot be very deep, I fancy," said Saltichus, with an air of authority.

"No; as you may have noticed, the dredgers are always at work. We must deepen it, if large ships are to stay here."

"Is Maeslem Meer deep?"

"No; none of these Meers are. Even the Zuyder Zee is not so deep as one might expect. The reclamations would be much more serious undertakings if they were."

"I suppose when you dredge, you throw the surplus on reclaimed land?"

"Yes. And so dyke and dam out our enemy."

"Then reclaimed land must be curious soil."

"He is thinking of shells and sea-weed, coral and oysters," put in Guy.

"It makes rich pasture land."

"The blocks of stone you have piled up here, ready for use, I suppose, must make rather a weary work-a-day look out, Mr. Travers?"

"Oh! one gets used to it. And it is a sign of life and of work."

"You level, I suppose, before you sink them?"

"Yes; by divers."

"And where do you get them from?"

"Oh! all about. Amsterdam, the Helder —some from the colonies."

"Indeed," said Saltichus, and he seemed struck.

"The blocks are piled on the level surface and fitted in," explained Randolph.

"And they are sufficiently firm?"

"Oh, there are iron cramps, of course, and so on: and we throw rocks alongside to break

the force of the waves. If you walk out there now, you will see a huge siding of rocks, rising higher every day to protect our work and shelter it from the wind.

"The North Sea is a strong enemy."

"Do you know Holland well, Doctor Saltichus?" asked Guy.

Then Saltichus knew his questioning was at an end, and that he must stand his cross-examination. Nevertheless, he was satisfied; he had not been idle.

"Hardly at all. Beyond Amsterdam and this neighbourhood—save, of course, Rotterdam, where I spent a day when I landed—I have been nowhere."

"You were here, I think, before you came to live."

"For a day, yes," answered he drily.

"Do you like it?"

"Yes. As yet I have not found it exactly sociable, but my work and profession are such that I have little time to care about that. The first impressions of Holland are very pleasant; the bright dresses in the streets, the

many colours of the barges and boats in the canals; the masts of the ships, too, and the trees on each side of the streets, are a foreign and pleasant feature."

"But you have that in America, too?"

"In America? oh no!" he was suddenly silent. "After England," he went on easily, "it is very new."

"England? have you ever been there?"

"I was born there."

"What? you are English then?"

"My mother was an American."

Randolph got up and stirred the fire.

"Shall we turn round?" said Guy, and the servant put some glasses on a little table in front of it, while Guy pushed the port wine near Saltichus.

"Help yourself," said he.

"I was born in England, too," said Randolph comfortably, anxious to wait for the guest's confidence till the servant should have left the room. "I lost both my parents early, and have always had to make my own way. I have never regretted it though. I

think we turn out men according to the work we have to do."

"You have succeeded, certainly, Mr. Randolph," said the young doctor. "Universal respect and admiration is yours, in Holland at all events."

"Hear! hear!" said Guy. "Help yourself, Saltichus. I have never worked at all. I am but beginning now to try to follow Randolph's good example."

"It has been up-hill for a long time," said George, musingly. "But, after all, a thing that is not difficult is not worth doing. And in this sort of work, one leaves one's mark behind one."

"Have you no brothers, sir?"

"No. The other representatives of the name of Randolph are idle men of pleasure; they consider themselves the credit to it, and I, the engineer cousin, am the discredit. I do not care much which way it is. We are each happy in our own line. I could no more be idle than they could work."

"Still you must not cry down the genus

Noble Idleness, George. Must he, Saltichus? It has been England's glory, and there are but few shreds of it left. It is the game of see-saw, alas! now. Aristocracy down, money-ocracy up."

"I have always had a great respect for work," said Saltichus.

"By all means," laughed Guy.

"Without it I should have been nothing. I am a self-made man."

"Help yourself, Saltichus," and Guy pushed a fresh bottle of port towards him.

"I was nothing, no one, nameless," and he pushed the wine away. "I ran away from home. Home! can you fancy it?" he dwelt on the word. "I never knew it. You, Mr. Travers, you, who had father and mother, brothers or sisters to soften life, and to put joy into it; not only that, but to soften you, and to hide bitterness and suffering from you; you can't fancy my running away, can you? And yet I was no fool."

"Unkindly treated, perhaps?" put in Randolph.

"Yes. But that wasn't it. Hark to this. You have a mother you say," and he turned sharply to Randolph. He shook his head sadly. "No, you," and he turned round quickly, his face on fire with impetuous excitement, to Travers, "well, could you bear to see her ill-used, misjudged, set on a shelf, insulted?"

"No," said Guy, answering him to the full as eager. He was thinking of his own mother.

"No more could I. Oh, it sows the iron in a man's soul, that it does. She was the only one who was kind to me, and she knew, she understood. She used to call me to her, and praise me. 'Her Hector, her good, her proud, her brave Hector.' I *could* have been good or brave for her. She died. . . . . Psha! I'm maundering. I ask your pardon."

He rose to his feet. He was the stately, cold, impassible Doctor Saltichus again.

"In England was this?" threw out Guy, laconically.

"Yes; he was cruel, selfish. He never acknowledged me."

"She was his wife?"

"Yes. But it was a runaway marriage, secretly and hastily done, and he would never own to it afterwards."

"Ah!" thought Guy, in whose secret heart the fiat went against the case. He himself knew of a parallel one; "another of these unfortunates. Born to suffer, to hate, to bring misery and retaliation on the world. That is all."

There was an embarrassed silence.

"He would have me learn nothing. He said I must shift for myself, and so I have. She tried to teach me. Poor mother. . . . . She called me clever. Much good it was."

"When she died you ran away?"

"Yes. It was a false step, but I could not stay. Life there was one long humiliation, and it no longer mattered to her where I was."

"Is he alive still?"

"Oh yes! alive . . . . he and his other children are there. They live, they laugh—

they have their sports and their wealth—my turn will come some day."

"Why, Guy, what's the matter?" asked Randolph.

"I was only thinking what an awful thing it must be to go about with a wound rankling in one like that. Couldn't you forget it, Saltichus?"

"Forget it, no? Why should I? I want to hunt, and to live, and to shoot. I like that avenue of oaks, and that hall with the family pictures set round. I am young; am I never to have one day of that cover-shooting? Why shouldn't I cross a three hundred guinea horse as well as Oliver or Albert, or whatever the name of his other progeny may be? I am the eldest son."

"Tell us what you did, Saltichus, after things came to that hard pass?"

"I went to London. I was young and strong. I stole some money to start with from my father; it was not stealing, I had a right to it, he had never paid a penny for me. Hadn't I a right to it?"

"Yes," said Guy.

"No," said Randolph.

"Never mind! I thought I had, then! I wished then I could have found more to take. I went, and studied night and day. I was clever—my mother was right. I nearly killed myself with study. I made friends with an old woman—she's dead now—and I prepared to be a medical student—I walked the hospitals. I was getting on, when one day I met my father in the street. I could hardly breathe—I hated him so. I must put more space between us. I went off to America."

He said the last word "America," as though it were a long way off, which it is not now; as though it were a new world—it is not that now! So far did he make it seem that neither Randolph or Travers thought of following him there for the moment.

"It was hard," said Randolph.

Saltichus made signs of preparation for departure.

"It is getting late," said he. "I have monopolized the conversation. Some day will you

come to me, and tell me your . . . happier experiences of England!"

Randolph's in for it! thought Guy, and answered glibly:

"By all means; with great pleasure we will come. Your days have been sad ones, Doctor Saltichus. I hope here . . . ."

"Oh yes! weary at rest, and that kind of thing! thank you. But there is not much rest for a doctor. Like a good horse, the better he is, the more he is worked. You found that with yours, I dare say, Mr. Travers?"

"Perhaps you are right. But I think one is grateful to a good animal, and one tries to save him. In my stable I have had one or two that it went to my heart to distress. My best friends they were, and thanks to good care they were seldom sick or sorry while I had them."

"Are your brothers as mighty Nimrods as yourself?"

"Nimrod will no longer be coupled with the name of Travers, alas! for him. I have

given all that up now. Brothers? No! I have only one, and he's a sailor. We don't see many Jack Tars in the Shires. They have not much chance of getting there."

"Why is it all given up?"

"Poverty!"

"I beg your pardon."

"My dear fellow, it is no secret. Bank notes—money swindled away, everything gone smash, and creditors staring at us round every corner. Not our fault, so no satisfaction to be got out of it any way."

"And your home?"

"Standing there—and my poor old father going about, with bent head and weary face, like some spectre of the past. One doesn't care for one's self. It is just those who are old or helpless like him, or like my mother and sisters, for whom one's blood boils."

"Hard! very hard on them."

"And on him," cried Guy, a sort of fascination growing on him as he looked into Saltichus' face and talked of his home and people. "When I think of it all, trees being cut down . . ."

"Oaks?" asked Saltichus drily.

"Yes. Oaks! Shooting let, horses sold—servants sent away,—more, the dull, hopeless aimless life my sisters have to lead. I can't help wondering why it should be. If there be a just God why must innocent people suffer through the sins of another, whom they never harmed?"

"Why indeed?"

"And you, too, Doctor Saltichus, you have gone through something of the same sort!"

"Fellow-sufferers!" answered he, and stared into the fire.

"Your father should not have had you there if he did not mean to acknowledge you, Doctor Saltichus," said Randolph, who had been trying logically to understand the story.

"No! that was cruel!" said Guy. "You ought to have written a book."

"About it?"

"No! But I have been told that writing a book—any book—makes the greatest difference in domestic and social life. You assert

yourself—and some one, a fraction of the public, or your publisher—believes in you! Your family follows suit at once. Your father would have acknowledged you in a minute! And everyone writes a book now, so you could. I would do it myself, only I can't afford it."

"I'll remember. But I hope he will acknowledge me some day without that!"

It sounded like a threat.

After that he went. Travers went outside with him, and Saltichus grasped his hand and smiled with unusual cordiality as he bade him good-night.

For a moment Guy stood alone looking at the stars and the sea. The expression of his face was fixed and miserable.

"There is a fate in these things! But I will not believe it. I will shake it off. He to be a Travers! He, to have hunted me up here!"

"Don't let us have him again!" said Randolph. "He makes me shudder."

"I don't like a fellow to rail quite so pub-

licly against personal misfortune either," said Travers.

"But wanton selfishness like that is hard to bear."

"Very. But it was his fate."

"Hard fate!"

"And about his not breathing! That was nonsense. The old man probably passed on the other side of the street, and never knew or saw him. There was plenty of room to breathe."

"How do you know he was old?" asked Randolph. "And why, my dear fellow, did you talk that rubbish about writing a book just then?"

"To lighten the conversation, which was too lugubrious, and to shake off the effect;" and Guy shook himself as he spoke, like a wet Newfoundland dog.

"I don't think he half liked it. A man doesn't like to have his personal troubles so easily disposed of."

"Well, I should! But I can't help that. Good-night! I'm off," and he took up his

candle and went out. "I say, George!" added he, a moment after, coming half into the room again, and holding the door in his hand, "there was no marriage, I should think?"

"Most probably not! He might wish to give himself importance in our eyes, and make us think he is heir to a kingdom."

"A case of Oh! Kingdom, Come!" and Guy, making a mock gesture of invitation in the air with his hand, went off whistling.

CHAPTER VIII.

"And I did it, he thinks, as a thief;
Though I love her—that he comprehends—
One should master one's passions, (love, in chief,)
And be loyal to one's friends!"

BROWNING.

"PLACE AUX DAMES!" Really from the length of time that we have spent with these dull black-coated men, British politeness is at stake!

To go back for, what will be to you, five minutes:

When Miss Vincent walked into Madame van Hovenaar's drawing-room that evening, now some weeks ago, and when the pretty surprise that awaited her met her view, anger and consternation flashed from her dark eyes. Very

handsome did Clara look, in a pink silk dress, with white pearl beads round her throat, and her dark hair thrown back from her face, but she had flushed angrily, and her lip had trembled with ill-concealed vexation, as she met Roeland's eye.

Fair dreams of love, position, of a prosperous useful life dispelled all in one moment! How often a woman's only profession fades from her view as quickly as this, and she is left standing alone, stranded and idle, finding it a hard matter to live out her life creditably and win common regard from her neighbours!

Roeland had been Clara's hero; the embodiment, that is, of as much heroic as she could attain, comprehending wealth, youth, and rank. For Roeland, and to win Roeland, Clara would have done more than for any one else in the world.

Now——

But Clara never showed, beyond the first half moment when she was taken by surprise, that there was no beyond to that now for her,

and she sat down by Lisa and talked away, evidently wishing to attract Roeland and to entangle him into conversation. But he was too far away to be lured back thus. Looking down upon the two faces, as the girls sat on low chairs, and as he stood with his back to the fire on that insidious white hearth rug, he wondered how he could ever have wandered from one to the other. Lisa was a melody —Clara, the type of the clever talking woman —a discord.

In fact she jarred upon him dreadfully, coming in at that moment. It ruffled him shockingly. It reminded him of his faults, and seemed as if it must lower him in Lisa's eyes. Certainly Clara had attracted him, and had afforded him much amusement, but he had never really cared for any one in his life but for Lisa.

"Good-night, Baron van Franckenburg," said Miss Vincent, as he handed her to her carriage. "What a pretty picture it made as I came in. I was quite sorry to disturb you."

"You need not have been that. But we were very contented."

"I shall take care not to risk it again."

"Thank you, Miss Vincent. But you are needlessly careful."

Bitter resentment had been Clara's feeling ever since. To forgive Lisa for her successful rivalry was impossible; not to hate Roeland for his deception was also impossible. But she showed nothing of this. That pretty scene in the room scented with flowers and bright with light and sweet music was seldom absent from her brain, but she seemed as though she had never seen it. She was ready to spring, but the opportunity had not come yet, and she awaited it in a graceful attitude, and smiling, with no appearance of preparation.

Meanwhile, to Lisa everything seemed going wrong, and during all these weeks she had been employed in learning more clearly what an extraordinarily prolific place for cross questions and crooked answers this world is. And whose fault was it? Sometimes it was

Roeland's. How provokingly stupid and tiresome of him not to see that she cared for George Randolph—did she not always prefer skating with him?—and if Roeland knew anything about caring, as he said he did, how could he dream that it might be possible for her to care for two people at once? Then, poor Clara! Ah! how hard it was. Lisa's heart bled for her. But what could she do? When sometimes Lisa smiled on her, and brought Roeland to her or sent him with a message, Clara bestowed the answering smile on George Randolph, not on Lisa, or on Roeland.

Why?

Now as George seemed the only man existing for Lisa, so she thought Roeland must be the only recipient of Clara's smiles. Lisa judged of others by herself. There was no afterthought or calculation in her affection, and Lisa thought that Clara's feelings must be the same—just as innocent, just as unworldly, just as loyally unselfish.

The winter was drawing on apace, with

its slow-breaking dawns, and fast-falling nights. Frost and snow came upon them suddenly, hanging silvery fretwork on blade and twig, enveloping the fir-trees in graceful white mantles, and throwing a great white covering over the pastures, where the blue lines the water made seemed like veins intersecting the landscape. Holland's veins, these canals and light lines are; giving life and strength to the country, as blood gives life to the human body.

The sudden cold woke up the young people to life and exertion, and while their elders shivered and crouched over their fires, and became anxious about draughts and temperature, exercise and amusement were the chief anxieties of the younger portion of the community. Skating and sledging were the daily occupations, hockey on the ice, and other games, the principal excitement.

One day they were skating on the lake at Lindehout; the old baroness was being wheeled about in her chair; she delighted in listening to their merry voices.

In one corner Mr. Vincent was struggling about on his skates, grappling at a ball against Heer van der Pyl, while Guy was striding over to them at nineteen miles an hour; Clara was being pushed in a chair by Randolph, Adrian van Bruynesteyn was keeping an eye on Lisa, and squeezing in a word with her whenever he could, Mrs. Vincent was walking up and down on the bank, like a hen who has lost her ducklings, and Lisa herself, in a suit of furs, and a blue dress trimmed with fur, with a black hat that set off her fair hair, was skimming about, here, there, and everywhere. Guy Travers thought as he scurried by, he had never seen anything so charming. What a bore it was he had not a penny wherewith to bless his pretensions, and what a fool George was, to be sure!

Just then there was a sound of loud tinkling bells, and everyone looked round. It was Roeland van Franckenburg, driving up in a sledge. It was shaped like an eagle with half-spread wings, and was of gold. In the sunshine, coming over the dazzling snow,

it looked like a great golden eagle, driving the swift black horses in front of it, and swooping down upon them all. The light glinted brightly on the gilded plumage of the neck, and made a thousand reflections of brilliant rays. Lisa uttered a little exclamation of surprised joy.

Roeland seemed like a god coming from another sphere. He was Phaeton; the coursers and the eagle obeyed his lightest touch. He was not Roeland at all.

Lisa stood still gazing with childish delight.

The snow and the sun, and the fairy-like trees seemed to change the whole scene away from this work-a-day world.

Clara stood still, too.

"I wish I had a sledge like that," said she.

"Easily got," said Randolph, gaily.

And she knew he meant that if she would share one with him she might have it for the asking. She sighed to herself. Honest worth looked so dull beside that brilliant Roeland

And now Roeland stayed the swift horses, and they stood pawing the ground and champing their bits with ill-restrained impatience, their black coats standing out in bold relief against the pure background of snow.

Roeland sprang out of the sledge and, giving the reins to his servant, put on his skates; then crossing the ice, made straight for Lisa.

For the first time in her life, she felt afraid of him. It could not be the fierce-looking eagle; was it the splendour or the surprise? She did not know. For the first time she recognized him, not as the old Roeland of her childhood, not as the boy-playmate to be teazed and confided in, but as a new Roeland—to be feared, loved, helped, and avoided: a man, almost equal to George Randolph.

Instinctively she turned on her skates and skimmed away.

"Why, Lisa, what have I done?" called out Roeland. "Won't you come and see my

new sledge? Don't you like it? I thought you would."

Then she turned and smiled, blushing, half ashamed of herself.

"Roeland, you should not come to me first like this, straight across," seeking excuse in true feminine subterfuge.

"Oh! I see. I beg your pardon. I am sorry."

But he did not look so; he only smiled back into her eyes, and seemed to think he had a right to go anywhere that he liked.

"Will you come and look at the sledge?" and he held out his hand for her.

She skated beside him obediently, without seeing his hand; so that he had to take hers.

"I say, Baron Roeland," said Guy, coming up to them, "fine feathers are all very well; but gold and war-paint to that extent is rather a shame on us poor fellows, who are only hewers of wood and carvers of stone."

"Come and see it, my dear fellow," said Roeland.

He was elated. He was laughing to himself at the change that had come over little Lisa. What trifles win a woman, to be sure!

"Oh dear! how wonderful it is! What a bird—" Mrs. Vincent was fluttering all round it, bewildered with fluctuations of hope and despair with regard to her Clara. Would she really be a baroness some day, and would she sit in a gold chariot like that, by the side of a real live, rich, young baron? oh, it was too much.

"Do you like it, Lisa?" asked Roeland, as she stood on the bank in her skates, leaning lightly on him.

"Jove's Bird, and right regal it is," said Guy.

"It is beautiful," said Lisa.

The others were crowding round.

"But it is cruel," she added, hastily.

Its blood-red eyes and savage, half-open beak, with head turned towards heaven, seemed to leave earth behind as though beneath its aspiration. The claws were red, and dangerous looking talons they were.

"Red, to match my harness," explained Roeland.

The shadows of the feathers and the body of the sledge were black; the red and gold relieved it in places.

"Will no one come for a drive with me?" asked Roeland.

"Ask Clara," said Lisa in a low voice; and, turning to Guy, she added aloud, "It is too cold to drive. Lend me your hand back to the ice."

"It is too cold. You are right," said Roeland, and signing to the servant to keep the horses moving, he followed her.

"You are wrong to be so unkind," said Guy to Lisa. "He deserves better."

That was a friend's voice. Lisa perhaps would have been wiser for more such words. She felt sorry directly.

"I wanted him to drive some one else."

"But he wanted to drive you. And there is no use in running counter to everyone."

What could Guy mean? Lisa began to think Mr. Travers very disagreeable.

Roeland was full of a plan he had just conceived. He was tired of his solitude, for the frost had suddenly stopped his shooting, his friends had departed from his hospitable roof, and he had suddenly taken it into his head to give a ball. He should like to see his grand old house decked out in holiday garb; he should like to see Lisa dancing and laughing there, brightening the rooms with her presence. He asked her about it to-day. Mrs. Vincent was wringing her hands on the shore, partly from cold and partly from vexation, as she saw them skating together. Guy was there too, however, so that was a safeguard.

"Lisa, I want to give a ball. Will you come?"

Lisa was surprised.

"Is it not rather soon, Roeland, to be making so merry? Oh well! No. Your father—when was it?—last summer twelvemonth? Oh very well! The king is dead. Long live the king."

"Then I have your sanction? and you will come?"

"Yes," laughed she, and skated away.

"But," said Guy, "do have some of your Dutch people as well. Some of your farmers and their wives. Here have I been two months nearly, and I know nothing of them."

"So I will," said Randolph, who was easily led by Guy. "All the tenants shall come."

"I am glad. I shall like that," said Lisa, coming back.

"Society people are not half Dutch to my mind. They talk every language under the sun; and one feels more French than Dutch when one is with them," said Guy.

"That is quite a mistake," said Roeland, gravely. "We are anything but French. However, our boers are hard to get at, I confess. They are more independent than their landlords."

"I must ask the others about the ball," he added.

"Let me," said Guy, and throwing up his hat he called out, "Hear, hear! Oyez, Oyez! Baron Roeland van Franckenburg, on this

day week, at Bloemenhof, intends to give a ball. Hear, hear! Who'll come?"

There was a shout of applause, and Clara smiled and clapped her hands. Roeland watched her jesting merrily with Randolph and Heer van der Pyl, even bestowing notice on Guy Travers, and gliding about on her skates as gracefully as ever, with her swan-like head erect and dignified, as though it had never known disappointment or suffered defeat. And when he went to her to ask her about the ball, she answered him merrily and gracefully still, saying it would be delightful and that she and Lisa would help him with the decorations.

Then Guy proposed a quadrille, and insisted on Mr. Vincent getting a partner.

Roeland, seeing Lisa engaged by Adrian, brought Mrs. Vincent down from the rocky shore; the old lady was at once flurried, flattered, and frightened by the attention, and then Roeland, catching sight of Lisa's old nurse, who in an unwary moment put her head out of one of the windows, he had his

skates off in a twinkling and pursued the old woman through half the attics in the house till he succeeded in bringing her down and in making her dance opposite to him.

And then, alas! too soon, the short day closed, and they had to cease their sports.

Wine and refreshments were served in the house, and then with hearty good-nights and hopes for the frost to last yet a little longer, they all separated and went their different ways.

"Well, my dear?" asked Mrs. Vincent, with an anxious sigh, of her daughter, as they sat together in the jagdwagen.

How often that "Well, my dear?" is the last straw that breaks the camel's back to many a helpless girl.

"Well, mamma?" answered Clara, innocently. "How cold it is, isn't it?"

"Well, my gal?" asked Mr. Vincent, rather drearily, as they arrived at home, and he gave her his hand.

"Well, papa? Will not the ball be charming?"

That gave her another week, and was not quite such a tangible put-off as the cold.

But in truth she was very weary.

Ambition is a sorry hound to hunt with, and is often at fault when Fate chooses to side with the ill wind that blows the scent away. Personal feeling interferes with Pursuit, and eagerness leads to blind leaps, while interfering ignorant sportsmen break the precious line. Moreover, foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, and rich young eligibles share the Law of Compensation by having unusual craft and wiliness given unto them as their portion.

CHAPTER IX.

"In the cruel fire of sorrow
Cast thy heart, do not faint or wail;
Let thy hand be firm and steady,
Do not let thy spirit quail:
But wait till the trial is over,
And take thy heart again;
For as gold is tried by fire,
So a heart must be tried by pain."

A. A. PROCTOR.

THE evening when Roeland was to give his ball at Blœmenhof came.

Outside, an avenue of flaring torches and coloured flames springing up into the frosty air testified to the gaiety going on; while within, the old house was tricked out with garlands and roses, and illuminated from attic to office. Grave old Dutch ancestors

and statesmen looked down from their frames on the gay throngs moving about, and seemed, such is the force of imagination, to have a sort of pleased smirk on their faces. Downstairs, in the lower hall, a long table was set out for the tenants and boers, while in the dark-panelled dining-room above, a brilliant array met the eyes of the nobler born guests. Many there were from a distance. The Count van Bruynesteyn had brought a goodly number of guests, Roeland himself had invited several people to come from the Hague to stay at Blœmenhof for the night, and the Baroness van Hovenaar had not been behindhand in inducing some of her high connections to come, for Roeland's sake.

Roeland was everywhere at once—now receiving the old Baroness who had been tempted to come for half an hour to hear the gay music and the pleasant young voices—now welcoming the boers or greeting a pretty boerin with a merry word provoking a smile and blush—now passing the guests

on to the different reception rooms, and at last entreating Lisa to open the ball with him. Clara was splendid in an artistic arrangement of two shades of pink; the air of indifference she put on to all the homage she received added to the effect. She looked a queen, who would trample on her subjects. Every one asked who she was, and the boers whispered to each other in Dutch about the proud English beauty. Old Jan Kruseman, leaning against the wall, heard a young man praising her.

"Be not too sure, Fritz," said he. "I would not like to prophesy her future or her end!"

"You are severe!" said Fritz. But after all, old Kruseman was an authority, and was treated with such universal respect that Fritz said no more.

"Look at Freule Lisa," said an old vrouw, who was standing next.

"Ah! she is a queen!" said Jan Kruseman, enthusiastically, "and Baron Roeland thinks so too!"

"She is every one's favourite!" said a boerin, with a gay coral necklace, and splendid head-piece, with filigree gold earrings, blinkers and pins.

"And look at her dress!" said an old lady in a stiff black satin, with a fall of white lace, and diamonds for head-gear. "It is like her mind: as delicate and as pure. What soft grey, and those bunches of violets say, right out loud, 'Love me! Love me!' and the silver butterflies say that she'll fly away if everyone is not kind!"

"Really Vrouw Rappendorpff, you are speaking the truth!"

"And look!" said the boerin—she was a Fresian, and very pretty—"that light creamy white tulle falling and flying about her looks like vapour, or like angels' wings!"

"She looks like a spirit!" said Fritz, who had first admired Clara.

"No spirit had such fresh dainty colour as that," said Jan Kruseman, "nor had any ghost such pretty round cheeks, and did ever a spirit's eyes dance with joy so?"

"I do not understand it," said Jane Lord, trying to join in. "Mr. Kruseman, how is it? Mr. Randolph used to be such a welcome guest at Lindehout, and now just look at him bending eagerly over Miss Vincent's chair!"

The others moved away, headed by the old lady in the stiff black satin dress. They did not like Jane Lord: their reputations might be damaged if they were seen talking to her. She bit her lip, and wondered if Jan Kruseman would go away too. But he stood as firm as a rock.

"Herr Randolph is one very foolish man," said Jan, in very broken English. The Colonists were teaching it to the boers by degrees.

"Lisa, you are lovely to-night," said Roeland, as their hands met for a moment in the dance, and he led her back to her place. "You remind me of Greuze's picture 'La Cruche Cassée.'"

There was no time to answer. The loud music called her back, and she mingled with

the swift dancers; Roeland only saw her soft dress fluttering away.

"I thought perhaps you would not come back!" said he again. "If your wings were to take you away ever like that, I should die, Lisa!"

"No, Roeland! you would not," said she.

She hardly knew what he was saying. Her eyes were fixed in a distant corner of the room where Randolph and Clara were together.

"Are you happy, Lisa?" asked Roeland.

He knew she was not, for he had followed her gaze, but he wanted her to give him a chance of saying that he could make her happy.

"No, Roeland! I am not!" said she.

She turned as she said it, and her eyes fell after she had seen his face.

"Blœmenhof is gayer to-night than ever," said he, "and why? because in this Court of Flowers, the fairest flower that earth ever

produced has deigned to bloom to-night. Lisa. . . . ."

"Hush, Roeland! you are cruel!"

"Cruel!"

Roeland swore to himself as he danced, and hated Randolph and Clara, and everyone in the whole world but Lisa.

And the music went on; bright eyes pledged each other, the gay heads of the boerinnen nodded, while their elders wagged theirs approvingly—and hearts and feet beat in time, and soft words mingled with the air.

And meanwhile Lisa learnt her lesson. Her eyes were opened and she saw. The dream had fled, and the waking was not pleasant, but she managed to smile upon it. A wry little smile it was; it is hard to make it a very bright one when the dull fact of self-deception is the subject, harder still, when looking up, she saw, George Randolph standing there, waiting to receive it.

"At last!" thought she to herself. "And I will know!"

"How do you do?" said she to him. "I thought I was forgotten!"

"Forgotten?"

And his awkward surprise, his quick-coming colour told the tale too well.

"Will you dance?" asked he.

"I don't see the use of it. Do you? What do you think about it?"

Aroused and indignant at last was she, this long suffering one? This was then his dismissal. This was the end of his love-making to sweet Lisa van Hovenaar. Friend and lady lost in one moment. Yet it was just! He could but bow his head, and prepare to move away, admiring her more at that instant, perhaps, who knows? even loving her again almost as in the old days.

"George!" said she, making a step forward as he went, and laying a light hand on his arm, "I never saw it till to-night. You love her! Good-bye. Be good always, be the old bright honest clever George whom I used to admire so much—just for Lisa's sake. Good-bye!"

He tried to smile at her, though he felt ashamed of himself, but he could not. She smiled at him, and then he went.

"By Jove! could I help it? Can a man help himself, I want to know? Clara is so splendid."

Lisa stood still looking at the dancers.

Doctor Saltichus came up to speak to her.

"Alone, Miss van Hovenaar?"

"Resting for a moment."

"Down below, they are dancing too, wildly dancing. Some of the Englishwomen are rather bewildered at the Dutch dances."

"Baron van Franckenburg thought it was better to have two places to dance in, as the boers are apt to get rather wild, and their dancing would hardly suit some of us."

"Will you dance?" asked Guy Travers, walking up. He had just caught sight of Saltichus beside her, and he could not bear that she should be talking to him.

"No, I cannot dance," said she.

She felt more inclined to cry.

Guy thought something was wrong, and

took up his position beside her, while Saltichus moved away.

"Why did Roeland ask that Death's Head?" asked he, jerking his finger towards Saltichus.

"He is very handsome."

"Fact? Your opinion? Well! I should have given you credit for more taste."

"Roeland thought it would be kinder to ask him!"

"Kinder! Kindness makes more fools in the world than anything I know."

Supper was going on in the dining room. What a clatter of knives and plates! and what a noise of opening of bottles. The soft music could hardly be heard.

Through the din, Mr. Vincent heard his daughter's voice:

"Papa!" said she softly.

"My gal!" said he briskly.

"Come and sit down."

Adrian van Bruynesteyn, who had been her partner, discreetly left them together.

"Shall I marry George Randolph?"

Mr. Vincent pulled his whiskers.

"Has he proposed?"

"Shall I marry him?" insisted she.

Mr. Vincent's slower mind jumped over the proposal, and stood on a level with his daughter's intelligence.

"Might do worse! Your mother won't think much of it! Is? . . . ."

"Well?"

"Is the Baron a dry shot?"

"Yes."

"Oh, well! then, by all means! Honest man, good position, looked up to immensely in Holland, English popular—if you are clever, you might be a great lady as his wife, you know.

"All right, papa."

Rocland came up to beg for a valse, and she went off on his arm, while Mr. Vincent's face was clouded, and on his brow sat perplexity enthroned.

"Prepare yourself for a check-mate," said he to his wife, who was just getting up from her supper.

"Ah! Tom, don't!" said she, falling back into her chair again.

Heer Van der Pyl, who was passing and heard it, could not help laughing. Even Vincent himself smiled.

"Not Roeland! Some one else!" whispered he.

Up on her feet in an instant, and bustling into the ball room went Mrs. Vincent. There, circling together, Clara in Roeland's arms, throwing up languishing looks of love, and he blushing back into her face.

"Tom's a fool!" said Mrs. Vincent, and planted herself on a high chair to reconnoitre.

"Like old times," said Roeland to Clara.

He always seemed to think he was expected to make love to Miss Vincent when they met.

"Yes, Roeland!" lisped she.

"I love this valse," said he, "and especially with you."

Clara began to forget George Randolph.

"I have never been inside your house before. How lovely it is."

"A fine old place, but terribly large for a man alone."

"Blumenhof," said she musingly.

"Yes! A place for flowers!" But he would not disgrace the compliment he had paid Lisa, by repeating it to the less delicate Clara. "I wish they would let me transport more of them here. Will you come into the conservatory?"

Clara smiled at her mother as she passed her. Her own hopes were rising high.

"Tom's a fool!" said Mrs. Vincent to herself, more emphatically than ever.

The way to the conservatory was down a dimly-lighted, velvet-carpeted corridor. They passed under the crimson curtains together.

Just then Lisa's voice struck on Roeland's ear:

"But you know it is not so. You must not give way like this. We all suffer bitterly, and every man must bear his own——"

Clara left standing there, alone and forlorn, and Roeland eager and excited, pushed apart the curtains that hung before the embrasure, and saw Jane Lord sobbing, and Lisa herself, with traces of tears on her face, trying to soothe her.

"For heaven's sake, what is the matter, Lisa?"

The fact was, that Lisa had ultimately got rid of Guy, and when she was standing by herself at the door of the ball-room, she had heard some one crying. Down the passage she stepped, looking, and there in the dark corner had found Jane Lord.

At first she was silent and uncommunicative, would only sob and cry: said Lisa could not understand, so it was no use telling her. And so they sat in the dark together, and then Lisa, feeling very sad and lonely, had somehow or other—for women find weeping infectious—given way to an odd tear or two also.

Jane Lord, looking up, saw it glistening there.

"Why, miss, whatever is the matter with you?" She laid her rough hand on Lisa's, and sheer amazement checked her grief.

"Oh, Jane! you don't know. You couldn't understand," murmured Lisa, feeling rather ashamed of herself.

"Deary me! I could! I'm not so old myself. Dear heart, won't you tell me?"

"Oh! Mrs. Lord, I cannot. We are all so foolish, are we not? I came to comfort you, and I want it myself."

"Well then, I know all about it. Do you think we English don't see? It's all along of Mr. Randolph; he's blind and foolish—but now, never mind; don't you be foolish too. Take the beautiful young Baron, he's worth a hundred of him."

Even Lisa could not help smiling at hearing Roeland called beautiful.

"And go for rides in the golden eagle, and come and see me in it."

"But, Jane, what were you crying about?"

"That's it."

"What?"

"Why, visitors."

"O—h! Doctor Saltichus."

"Yes."

"Well, Jane, I must say——"

"Now, miss, don't you, too, go——"

"No; I won't."

"Well; here I come, and no one won't speak to me—not one of them. Even Jack, my own brother, has got sulky like at home, and when I go out for shopping, or anything, and I only go when I must, then they turns their heads away, and their noses go up, law! I don't know how high."

"But you should tell them, Jane."

"But I have nothing I can tell 'em, miss. He comes, and, well! he talks about home, or about Holland, about the sea and the ships, about the works, about America, and about seamen's lives. Now all that I'd tell 'em, but they wouldn't believe it—nor can I say it as he ses it; he talks so mighty fine."

"Has he been lately?"

"No; not for ever so long. But that makes no difference with these pig-headed people here. I declare, miss, I can't stand it; I shall go back to England. I shall. I am an honest woman, and I didn't come to furrin' parts to be brow-beaten and shamed in this way."

"Mr. Saltichus is very thoughtless."

"Don't you go for to tell him. I couldn't abear it. He's a good gentleman. And now to-night it has been dreadful. I wish—I wish—I wish I could throw myself into the sea, or do anything, *that* I do."

"Oh! but Jane . . . ."

"They'll drive me mad—that they will."

Then Roeland appeared.

"I'll dance with her myself," said he. "Be our *vis-à-vis*, Lisa."

"Well, take me back then," said Lisa, and finding old Jan at the door, she chose him for her partner, and they had a quadrille, during which Mrs. Lord's smiles vied with the brightest in the room.

George Randolph, crossing the hall, saw Clara standing alone. On the wings of love he flew.

"Come to the conservatory," said he.

"That conservatory is my fate," said she sarcastically; thinking to herself, "as well with one as with the other." Then she sat down on the divan, and listened to his eager protestations, carelessly listened, till the oppor-

tunity came for a graceful "Yes." This fruit that was thus offered to her, she cared not for it. But it was all within her reach seemingly. She must marry some one.

Revenge on Roeland and Lisa would be surer and swifter if she were married. She could do nothing as poor Clara Vincent. Besides, it was her duty to get married. What a bore George was. Why all this circumlocution? Should she have wasted her time in the conservatory with him if she had not meant to say "Yes."

George's ideas of marriage were so different from hers. So earnest, so high, so self-sacrificing.

Clara could hardly understand his prologue.

At last there was an opening: he had waited and hoped so long; he had worked so long.

"A very Jacob," said she, twirling her fan and looking down.

"Will you be my Rachel?"

"Yes."

The music was silent, the lights were out, and Roeland had bid his guests good-night. A smile was on his face. Randolph had whispered something to him ere he went, and Roeland was strangely hopeful.

"Well, my gal?" asked Mr. Vincent, as he held the door for her.

"It is all settled," said Clara.

"Tom isn't a fool," said Mrs. Vincent drearily, and betook herself to her slumbers in a disappointed spirit.

CHAPTER X.

"Is the creature too imperfect, say?
Would you mend it
And so end it?"

BROWNING.

IT was a breezy winter morning and Guy Travers stood at the end of one of the piers that was to form the harbour. He had come down with some order from Randolph for the new foreman, and he stayed there, looking on at the men's operations. The sea rose turbulent and white-crested, dashing over the boulders of rock, and enveloping them sometimes in something more than spray. It was the morning after the ball, and Guy was glad of the fresh salt air, and revelled almost as much as the waves

themselves seemed to do, in their joyous play. The men smiled and joked among themselves as the crests came up to them, sometimes threatening to knock them over; always the white foam lagged behind, and scarce had it left the stones than the alternate wave returned. There is something of a challenge in that triumphant burst of the boisterous rollicking wave, and Guy could not help thinking how tempting was the invitation held out for competing power.

"There's Mr. Bradlaw, sir," said one of the men, touching his hat to him.

Guy turned.

"An unexpected pleasure, sir," said he with his usual civility, laughing to himself at Bradlaw's evident discomfiture as he baffled against the elements. A vision of Ryde Pier under a high wind in the old yachting days, and of a ridiculous scene there, crossed his brain, and he could hardly help laughing outright as Mr. Bradlaw grasped his hand. There was a certain beauty about Guy in Mr. Bradlaw's eyes to which he himself could never attain:

for though Guy's poverty was despicable, yet was he not a scion of a noble race, a member of a good old English family? and such men Mr. Bradlaw, the contractor, had few chances of shaking familiarly by the hand.

"I came down to see Randolph," said he. "He was not at the offices; they told me I should most likely find him here."

"He sent me down instead."

"Somewhat of a nuisance!" ejaculated Mr. Bradlaw. "I came from Amsterdam on purpose."

He looked very cold, very blue and very miserable, standing there, holding his hat on.

"Come back and have something hot at the house, Mr. Bradlaw. We can send for George, if you must see him, though it is rather hard this very morning!"

"Why—where is he?"

"He had gone to Mr. Vincent's—to Meerfleet."

Guy's face was mysterious.

"You see he is engaged to be married," added he.

"What! not to that daughter of Tom Vincent's—not to her?"

"Yes! to her!"

"Poor fellow! he has found his match!"

"Really, Mr. Bradlaw . . . ."

"Well! I should not have believed it."

"A very handsome girl!"

"Oh! monstrous handsome — monstrous fine woman as you say. Always admired her myself!"

"Perhaps that's it?" asked George, who had found himself obliged to take up the cudgels for his friend, though he was secretly as much disgusted at the engagement as Mr. Bradlaw could be.

"No! by jingo! No; certainly not. Not if I knows it! I thought she was setting her cap at young Roeland, and I hoped——well! poor George!"

"He may improve her!"

"*Improve* her! She will have it all her own way. She will be no end of a nuisance. She

will deteriorate him, and we shall have no work done,—I look upon George Randolph as lost to us now!"

"He is too much of a man for that. If he were to marry his cook, he would raise her."

"Nonsense! I know him. I have watched him too long. She will drag him down, and he will get disheartened, and give up."

"I really think you are prejudiced."

"Oh! Vincent knew what he was about. The one would not bite, throw the line to the other."

"Miss Vincent is a very clever woman. I don't see . . . ."

"Oh! very clever! Ambitious enough for anything."

"All that nonsense must get knocked out of her."

They were silent for a moment, watching the great stones being lowered into the sea.

"She will be Randolph's cradle, my dear Mr. Travers, and will lower him—so!" He made the gesture with his hand.

"And George's own honesty of purpose

will be the wave that will buoy him up again," said Guy almost angrily.

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed Mr. Bradlaw; "men don't get the better of a dragging weight like that. I tell you, men can't raise women. The women are always the heaviest end, and the best efforts in the world can't raise the See-Saw!"

"George would."

"I tell you she will make herself ridiculous, and him too; and there's no fighting against that!"

"I trust you are a false prophet, sir;" and they began to walk homewards. Behind the house, the sandhills were still wrapped in their white covering. They looked like cloud visitants, frowning, dreary and merciless enough.

"I tell you there will be the very devil to pay. He'll be for getting a house now, and there'll be no end of outlay."

"I don't think George will let anything interfere with his work, any more than I think we should allow anything of that

sort to weigh with us in our opinion of him."

"Certainly men have made a bad choice in a wife before now."

"I hope this may not turn out bad. And such is his character, he ought to be able to overrule any prejudice against it that there may be."

"Why he did not marry Miss van Hovenaar, I cannot make out. Breeding, beauty, money, and all. In some things, Randolph is a fool. He does not exactly want raising, but she would have been everything that was wanting."

As they were turning up the little path that led to the house, they came upon Mrs. Lord, and she would have passed them with a mere "Good-day, sir," had not Mr. Bradlaw, who was full of excitement at the news he had just heard, stopped her.

"How d'ye do, Mrs. Lord?" said he, with an air of impatience, putting both hands in his pockets. "Have you heard the news?"

"No, sir, not I," said she, trembling and

tittering with pride and pleasure at being thought worthy of the communication. She had so few words thrown to her now.

"Mr. Randolph's going to be married to Miss Vincent!"

"Oh! that *was* it, then!" mused she to herself, all her colour going, and her mind starting back to Lisa on the previous evening.

"Deary me! that is a business." She looked in the gentlemen's faces for sympathy.

"So say I!" said Mr. Bradlaw.

"Don't you like Miss Vincent, Mrs. Lord?" asked Guy.

"Like her? Oh, yes! it isn't that," answered she, with a swift eye to the future. "But there is some one I should like a deal better. Miss Lisa—but there—Mr. Randolph must do as he likes—and she's a fine lady to look at, any way."

"Is your brother there, Mrs. Lord?" asked Mr. Bradlaw.

"Yes, sir; in the office, sir. Well, I am disappointed, too, and I can't help saying so. Miss Lisa is such a sweet pretty lady to come

tripping in, and"—Guy was sole audience now, for Mr. Bradlaw had stepped into the house—"one does like ladies to marry where their hearts are set. Men's hearts don't matter so much."

"You are talking treason, Mrs. Lord," said Guy, thinking, as he listened to her, of Saltichus, and wondering what on earth the attraction could be. All at once he remembered, on that first day, when Guy had seen them all for the first time, how he had started on hearing her name. The link between them must date long before the present time. The name of Lord—not the woman herself, not the time or the place—the name, must be the sole attraction.

Never had bloodhound unleashed followed up the track of fugitive with more persistency than had Travers hunted for facts about Hector Saltichus. Since that night when he had dined at the house by the sea, when first the horrible suspicion had crossed Guy's brain that he was his half-brother, he had given himself no peace or rest. But it was

all as yet in vain. His search was conducted with the greatest secrecy, and his investigations were thereby much crippled. He would not tell even Randolph of his fear, for there was no need to bring discredit on his father and family for nothing.

With this idea in his mind he found meeting Saltichus a very difficult matter indeed, and when the doctor had repeated his invitation for him to dine with him, a sort of shamefacedness had come over Guy; he had acknowledged to himself his repugnance to eat of the man's bread, and had refused. Now, perhaps, here was a loophole. Mrs. Lord might know something, and might be willing to tell.

Even as he turned to her again, with the intention of cutting short an harangue in which she was indulging about the respective merits of Clara and Lisa, he sought in his mind if there were no such name as Lord connected with his home in England. But he could make nothing of it.

"Did you enjoy yourself last night, Mrs.

Lord?" asked he, with his best smile, and leaning towards her over the gate that he had been swinging to and fro.

"Yes, sir. It was very nice at the end. Mr. Roeland, sir, danced with me."

"I did not see you dancing with Doctor Saltichus."

He said it jocularly.

She looked at him sharply; she did not know what to make of it.

"No, sir."

"Come, Mrs. Lord, be friendly. Tell me now what Dr. Saltichus comes about?"

"How should I know, sir?"

"Of course you do."

"The man's enough to drive one wild."

"You come from Lincolnshire, don't you, Mrs. Lord?" asked Guy, carefully.

"The very same question that he asked me."

"No; did he?" Guy was excited. "Did he now?"

"Yes; he did."

"And so you do, don't you?"

"No, sir; I don't. I come from Warwickshire, and so did mother, and so did John. We are all Warwickshire people. Now, sir, what is the matter with Warwickshire, that you should look so disgusted like? Is there anything wrong with the place? For my part, I think it's the finest county in England, and I have always heard that Lincolnshire is flat and ugly, and fens and fields like this."

"Oh! nothing wrong with the county, Mrs. Lord. But then Dr. Saltichus comes from Warwickshire, too, perhaps?"

"No, sir; he don't."

"Where from, then?"

"From Lincolnshire, I fancy."

"Ah! And then your father, Mrs. Lord, was Lincolnshire——"

"Warwickshire, sir——"

"I beg your pardon. I meant your husband. He was Lin . . . ."

"Warwickshire, sir. We were all Warwickshire people. Why, you want us . . . ."

"No offence. But then, Mrs. Lord, how

on earth did you come to know Saltichus before ?"

"Before, sir ? I never knew him before. I never saw him till that day I saw you. They were all of the same village : my John Lord, and Joe Dredge, and Mike Hope, and they went off to sea together. The other two come back, but my Jack has never come back yet."

"Where did he go ?"

"Oh, sir ! how can I tell you ? To China, and to America, and to Africa. Where didn't he go ?"

"And now ?"

"Now ? it's five years come this spring that's coming."

"Poor Mrs. Lord ! perhaps . . . ."

"No, sir ; I know what you are thinking of ; but it's all right, he'll come back sure enough. He said when he died he'd send me a sign, and I have never got it yet."

"If you are so sure," said Guy, smiling, but secretly admiring her faith, "I think it is a pity you let Dr. Saltichus come so often.

People will talk, you know, and what will your good man say to finding you the subject of scandal."

Jane's dark eyes glittered angrily for a moment, to soften the minute after, as she looked into the good-looking boy's face.

"Ah, sir! I can't explain it. He has a sort of power over me. And when I try to shake it off, I can't. Sometimes when I am alone, I think I have. Do you understand, sir?"

Guy nodded.

"Deary now! I couldn't tell this to a woman now; how she'd laugh and jerk up her head. Miss Lisa would look sorry. But you see it, sir? it isn't my fault. And I make up my mind not to let him come and sit there by the hour, just for the neighbours' sakes—and I get up when he comes in, and I say, 'Dr. Saltichus, sir, if you please, sir.' And he says, looking so cold and friendless-like, 'Good morning, Mrs. Lord; what a nice bright fire you have got,' and then, of course, I sets a chair, and of course he takes

it. You see I am a mother, sir, and have a mother's heart. And he seems so lonely like. Once I let the fire out that he mightn't say that, and he offered with his own hands to lay it and light it. There is something winning about him, sir, even something like yourself, sir."

"Do you think so, Mrs. Lord?" asked Guy, gravely, not relishing the climax at which they had arrived.

"Sometimes, sir, I don't know what to make of it. I sit, and think, and seem to be groping about in the dark. I seem as if something dreadful was agoing to happen to us all—John away, no one knows where, and father dead, and Jack so cross and sulky-like—and every one making my life so hard. Oh! it's dreary—I think, and think, and see no end to it. But an end must come, that's my comfort. I seem to be walking on ice that's agoing to break, but I don't know on which side. How I wish it would break and let's see clear."

"Mr. Travers! Mr. Travers!" called Mr.

Bradlaw's voice from the office window.

"I must go, Mrs. Lord. Will you come to me if ever I can do anything for you?"

"Thank you; thank you."

"Never you mind sulky young Jack, or your foolish neighbours. Keep a clear conscience, and do to everyone as you would be done by, and all must come right, whichever way the ice breaks."

"Yes, sir. True for you, and thank you."

"Mr. Travers! Really it is most imperatively necessary," began Mr. Bradlaw, in an aggrieved tone, "that I should see Randolph to-day. Could you send?"

"I will go myself," said Guy, who much preferred a walk over the sand hills to being boxed up for an hour with Mr. Bradlaw.

"No, no; you are too kind."

"Not at all," said Guy; and having ordered Mr. Bradlaw some luncheon, off he started.

A bleak, cold walk it was. On the landward side of the road the snow was built up in a high wall; the wind whistled over it now

and then, and the sea washing the shore on the other side sounded monotonous enough. He did not care. He was thinking over Mrs. Lord's story, and before he had reached the Vincents', he decided to write home to his father that very day. Let him know for certain, at least, if that half-brother of his was alive, or, indeed, if he had ever had a real half-brother at all!

CHAPTER XI.

"I took the threads for my spinning
All of blue summer air,
And a flickering ray of sunlight
Was woven in here and there.

* * *

I went up the hill this morning
To the place where my spinning lay—
There was nothing but glistening dewdrops
Remained of my dream to-day."

A. A. Proctor.

ROELAND'S friends, or rather let us say, his father's friends, were anxious about him. It was incumbent upon him to do something. What would their old comrade, the Baron, say, if he could only see his son dwindling down into a mere sporting farmer? He should enter Parliament, or he

should take some post, and at all events utilize the talents that God had given him. If he did not see the necessity himself, he must be roused, and must be made to see it. They gave him no peace, and did their best to show him what was expected of him.

But Roeland was hardly at leisure to listen to them; he was not at peace with himself; he was restless and disturbed. His mind was set on one point, and his best energies must be crippled and must lie idle, till he saw his way clearly. Lisa's hand held the balance, and his future rested with her. If she were with him, he would work; without her, his life seemed too dreary, too prosaic an affair, to be worth any effort at improvement; nor did he look upon himself as able, without her, to do anything for others. Strangely unheroic, you will say, for a man to let his life so depend upon a woman; but Roeland was yet young—barely twenty-five—and he had not learnt that often the best work is made of the proceeds of mere dejection and pain, and is the product of struggles to get free of the

Slough of Despond into which our folly has thrown us.

It was the second day after the ball. The laws of hospitality to the influx of guests from a distance had prevented Roeland and Lisa from meeting; but now the last friend had departed, and Roeland, thinking he should find Lisa alone, started off through the snow in his sledge to Lindehout.

He smiled to himself as he listened to the music of the horses' bells; he felt proud and joyous. He thought of the day when the golden eagle had won a triumph for him over Lisa, and now he thought success beamed on him securely. Was not Randolph disposed of? Lisa must marry him now; his delicate, pretty Lisa would be his, there was no one else. Marriage, to the foreign ideas of Roeland, was a grim necessity for her—for any girl—and the earlier consummated the better.

At the foot of the hill, who should he see in front of him but Lisa herself! The sound of the bells made her turn round, and smiling,

she waited for him. The cold gave her a bright colour, her fair hair shone and rippled away in the sunlight. A snow-flake had been captured here and there in its tresses.

"Whither away, oh golden bird?"

"To you. Where else?" asked Roeland.

"I was going home, Roeland."

"Then the golden bird spreads its wings, and offers, flying up the hill, to carry you safely there. Come in, Lisa."

Who could resist a golden bird with eyes and claws like that? Certainly not Lisa. In by his side in a moment, smiling and laughing, and exclaiming with pleasure as the black horses flew forward in answer to their master's voice. Over the snow, over the world, they seemed to fly.

"Not to Lindehout, Lisa," said Roeland in a voice of keen enjoyment; "it is so near. Let me take you farther?"

"Where you like, Roeland."

"This blessed eagle!" sighed he, thankfully to himself.

Faster and faster on they went—now

galloping down hills, now bursting through a pine forest, where the trunks of the trees seemed like spectres looking on, as they scurried by; now plunging through the drifts in the deep dark lanes, and now merrily fleeting along under the cold crisp rays of the afternoon sun. A steep hill lay in front, shining pure and white under its carpet of snow.

"That is heaven," said Roeland; "you are the ladder, Lisa; will you help me there? Or that is the new better life you can show me. Will you guide me in the path?"

Lisa smiled.

"I believe I am very heavy, Roeland. You would get up better without me."

"Seriously, Lisa; that is the hill of life. Let it be so. Say you will walk it with me? I will not drive on till you answer."

She looked at him perplexed.

"Let us follow the example set us by Randolph and Miss Vincent?"

"What?"

It was the first announcement of the en-

gagement to her. The colour left her cheeks.

"Did you not know they were engaged?"

She had dreamed it, and expected it in some sort of way. But not like this, not suddenly, not bursting upon her, a fact irremediable—unalterable. She leaned back in the sledge, and covered her face with her hands. He put the rug round her; he tried to comfort her in a hundred ways. How he hated Randolph at that moment and yet. . . . .

"Oh! Roeland!" sighed she.

"Dear Lisa!" . . . .

"Is it really true?"

"Yes."

"And he is happy?"

"Yes."

"Then it is easier!"

"Much easier, dear: everything easier. And now. . . . ."

"Oh, Roeland, you have seen my sorrow. I am ashamed. . . but—I shall never tell

any one else. You will never tell any one; because you love me, I tell you."

He had to think over that.

"It is so hard! I thought God. . . . . What am I to do now? Of course I will be his friend always . . . I was wrong, very foolish . . . ."

"Yes! And now you will marry me?"

"What? Oh, Roeland!"

Then she burst into tears outright.

"You don't understand. You are so foolish, so selfish, so—how *can* I marry you? is not seeing me thus enough to show you that? Because you are a man you think you have but to say the word, that I must go and I must come as you call. You don't see that *I* live, that I have a heart of my own. How can I marry you? My life wasn't that. George Randolph was my life. Now that that can't be—I shall have no life at all!"

"And you deny me one too?" cried he passionately. "What is mine to be?"

"Your's? I don't know. Not suffering like mine. Not self-abnegation, like mine.

But women's lives are so different, you cannot understand. Your's is selfishness. Wanting means having it with you—with us it means having to do without it. Your lives are satisfaction and pleasure, and having all your desires ministered to ; and our's is self-denial and patience, and the outer mask of indifference."

"Then share my brightness and my joy ?" pleaded he, pointing to the glistening hill which lay smiling in front of them.

Lisa looked at the hill.

"Don't you see Roeland that I can't ? I should soil it, and stain your life with regrets and despair. Mine will be hard enough. Don't weight it with heavier duties and deeper responsibilities. Give me no sorrow of yours to add to my burden. Go away with your mistaken entreaties, and with your golden eagle. Let me out."

"Very well, Lisa. Look here ! just listen to what you are doing. When you hear of me doing wrong, when you hear of Roeland —idle, foolish, falling lower every day"—she

got out of the sledge, and stood shrinking away from him with a sort of contempt on her grave face,—"with nothing good done, and every bad feeling indulged, with every power I have abused, and every friend I had estranged—then you will know it is your work. Good-bye—you are at Meerfleet. Are you going in? I take the golden eagle away!"

"That is not fair, Roeland!" called she looking after him, but he was too angry to listen.

A quarter of a mile off he stopped and turned to look for some sign of her. But she was not there.

"God knows I did not mean it. I will never really disgrace her sweet friendship for her pure soul's sake. But I was beside myself. Will she never listen to me?"

Next day Roeland went away to the Hague, and Franewyk saw him no more that winter.

Lisa had left the sledge close to the Vincents' gate.

"I will go in," said she, "and congratulate Clara. Better get it over!"

She was following up her usual plan of doing what was right and most unpleasant, and she opened the lodge gate and began to walk up the little avenue. There was no wind, and it was not cold. But it was getting late. Walking there she began to find she was not quite herself; she tried to pull herself together, but she felt miserable and low. She was not sure whether she could get over the congratulations quite properly. She took another turn to give herself more time, and then sat down on a felled tree. How long she sat she did not know, but she roused herself suddenly with a start to find that it was getting dark. She got up and began to walk rapidly to the house, was just nearing the porch, when the door opened, and a stream of light poured out on the snow.

Two figures appeared.

It was Clara and George Randolph.

Lisa, with her shaken nerves, could not

face them both together just then. Instinctively she stepped behind the porch, among the shrubs thickly growing there, and waited.

And then she heard his voice—those strong deep earnest tones that had once touched chords in her soul and had called forth vibrations thence just as he listed—now, it seemed to her as though it were afar off, as we listen to a language we do not know, or as we hear a bell that has nothing for us in it's message.

Lisa clasped her hands together passionately as the words came to her; soft lover's words they were. Just such had he once used to her, one evening when the moonbeams in tangled rays had come peering down upon them through the trees at Lindehout. But that was in the summer. The foliage was thick then, and the air was heavy with the perfume of flowers: she remembered even now the thick white bunches of acacia hanging overhead. And Lisa, frightened, had run away from him then, and

had dreamed to herself for months after of the glorious drama of life he had opened to her. Now, where had the glorious drama gone ?

"He changes his love with the seasons," thought she, and with the thought his bodily presence seemed to float far away from her.

Ah ! the caprice and faithlessness of women, say we ! Are we always right ? Are the anchors we hold out to them so sure, and strong ? Is it wonderful if they hesitate ere they risk their all, and grasp them for life ? Shipwreck for a woman means more than for a man ; he can start again, but the winds and tides of Conventionality are too strong for her, and she is usually, once wrecked, stranded for ever, and the coast is so bleak and friends are so few !

"The moon is rising. I must go, my darling. Clara, there is an old song I thought of last night. A man left his lady-love, and the moonbeams shone on her face ; it was smiling on him. Next evening he

came back, the moonbeams shone on her face again, and it was smiling still. But she was dead."

"How horrid."

"Clara, sometimes I think in this cold moonlight, if anything were to happen to you, you would send would you not? You would not hide anything from me?"

"Of course not, I wish you had not that solitary cold walk to take. It puts sad notions into your head."

"Clara, you *are* mine, are you not? There is nothing that any one else knows that I don't, is there?"

"Your's every bit, George."

The word sounded like a death knell to Lisa.

"Your life will be my life, will it not? We shall not be two—with separate aims, separate hopes?"

"No! Your life, my life, George!"

She gave a little shudder.

"Cold, darling?"

"Naturally."

Then he put his arm round her. Lisa saw the shadow on the snow. She turned her eyes away.

"But not your's yet, George, you know. Good-night!"

There was a murmured good-night from Randolph, and then Lisa saw him walk away. He was not two yards from her, but she did not move or call.

Clara stood watching him, ignorant that she still had a companion.

"He must not stay so long. I can hardly bear it every day. And to be cross-examined thus! What children men are! What maundering sympathy they want! How I shall be bored with life if this is to go on always! How many minutes are there in a year, I wonder? Keeping me out in the cold, too! I shall have a red nose for a week. Oh, yes! wave your handkerchief! Good-night! dear earnest George."

Then she turned to go in.

Lisa had meant to go to her when George had left, for they were outwardly great friends.

and Lisa had come to congratulate. But Randolph's retreating footsteps struck on her ear through the clear air, and opposing impulses held her silent.

A week sooner she would have followed Randolph and would have told him, speaking passionately even as she loved him, to beware of risking his happiness too hastily. An hour sooner she would have run after him, have confessed how she had come there, would have asked him to see her home, it being so late—and on the way, just for old friendship's sake, would have thrown out a word of caution about Clara's disposition.

Now—the well-known tones had jarred on her ear too discordantly. She felt too acutely what she suffered to confront him at all.

Clara Vincent went in, and shut the door. Lisa heard the key turn in the lock, and then she was left alone almost in the dark with that retreating form of George Randolph's becoming every moment more distant.

Just once she wished for Roeland, and then she thought rapidly that she had better follow George. Their road was the same, she would keep him within call; he would never see her, and if she were frightened then he would come. So through the winter evening they went; George, never knowing who was following on his steps.

The moon rose as he had said, and her cold rays seemed to mock Lisa, making dim shadows on the glittering snow. She walked on; and reaching the Lindehout gate at last, paused for an instant to watch him walking away—ever away—on into that dim future of his own choosing. And then his figure disappeared among the black shadows of the trees.

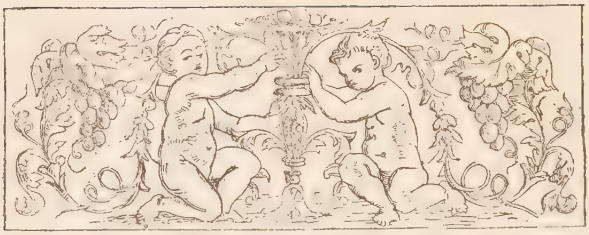
If he had known of the different thoughts of the two women, each bidding him good-night—which would he have chosen, think you?

It was not given him to see into futurity, and, I think, even knowing, even reading their souls that night, he would still have

followed his own bent, still have trusted in the might of his love, and still have chosen Clara Vincent.

As Lisa turned in at the gate, her great dog bounded up to her.

"Ah! Nero. Come then. You are my old friend still. All I have got now. Best and truest after all!"



CHAPTER XII.

"Fair hope is dead, and light
Is quenched in night.
What sounds can break the silence of despair?
Oh, doubting heart!
Thy sky is overcast,
Yet stars shall rise at last,
Brighter for darkness past,
And angels' silver voices stir the air."

A. A. PROCTER.

ALTHOUGH Clara Vincent had complained with true personal selfishness of the redness of her nose which must naturally result from her lover's thoughtlessness, yet she was in truth improving daily under his influence. Clara might be vain, and she had been ambitious; now too

many soft words were strewed along her path for her to remember the latter very clearly. Everything was swamped in flattered vanity, and in the present happiness of being complimented and caressed.

The more her parents saw of George, the better they liked him; Mr. Vincent, while he honoured him more highly every day for his sentiments, and wished that when he was young he could have afforded to indulge such, was lost in perplexity how it could be that, indulging them, worldly success was yet his; and Mrs. Vincent would sit by, listening to Randolph's talk, open-mouthed and admiring. In her mind, Clara caught some of the reflection of his glory. Such a great man at her daughter's feet naturally raised her daughter in the simple mother's estimation.

And Clara herself began to appropriate George's poetry and aspirations as jewels belonging to herself, to be flaunted before the eyes of the ignorant multitude. She did not understand them, often thought them high-flown and silly, but still they sounded well.

They had a ring of nobility about them; she would repeat some of his words sometimes, and would try to give the impression, as she smiled over them, that they alone had captivated her, that they were but the reflex of her own aspiring soul, and that his mind and worth had won her love to the exclusion of all worldly sentiments. Then, too, she began to believe that there must be something very great about herself that had won this clever man; something more than beauty: her moral power must be very great; and she resolved never to let it slip through her fingers. To be herself the crowning point, the climax, the medium of expression of all these grand thoughts, was very nice; she imagined she saw them fluttering before her in a fanciful crowd, to be called into being, into life, into expression and into importance in turn as she chose, as an air she might choose to play on the new piano her father had given her; she was queen of them all.

By-and-by, she thought vaguely, by-and-by, when she were really married, she was not

sure that she should not huddle them all up together, and doom them to endless perdition and suffocation. They would be a bore always, too high and too unreal to live up to; too grand for daily life. In fact, they were like the piano, must have a cover on, and must only be shown for company. Still, there they were now, and as she looked at herself in the glass, a sort of awe settled on her soul as she contemplated the face that inspired such high feelings and poetic sympathy in a man's heart.

And a man so universally looked up to!

Her dignity increased daily, and new airs and graces came to her. She spoke of Roeland as "That silly boy," or of Travers as of a sort of errand-boy to Randolph, to fetch and carry as they might wish. Vistas of future success, of future popularity, and of society cringing before her, crowded her horizon in wide blazing glories of varying colour, to which this roseate engagement-time was but as the faintest streak of dawn.

Lisa van Hovenaar, whose life had not

been of the most exciting or amusing nature lately, had been among the rest to pay her tribute of congratulations, and Clara had received them, after the first burst of triumphant feeling, with good will and gratitude. In fact, why should there be any rivalry between them? If Lisa had disappointed her of the young Baron, had not she in her turn dispossessed her of her English hero? and even Clara had heart enough to know that the Baron was nothing to Lisa in comparison with George Randolph. So that had she not got her revenge, and might they not faithfully be friends now? As for Roeland, that was another affair. It was very bad taste on Lisa's part preferring Randolph before Roeland, that Clara knew; it was blameable simplicity. But some people are so stupid!

"I came to wish you joy," said Lisa, as Clara got up from her work to meet her, and Mrs. Vincent struggled up from a large arm-chair in a distant part of the room.

"Thank you, Lisa."

"Always kind, always considerate," murmured Mrs. Vincent.

"My dear Mrs. Vincent, it was good news. I am sure you must all think so. I congratulate you on your son-in-law."

"He is perfection."

"He is one in a thousand," said Lisa, feeling she was not insincere as long as she praised him.

"Clara is very lucky."

"You will be very happy," Lisa turned to her smiling.

"I trust so. I hope so. George says happiness should not be the object of life."

"No. One grasps it soonest so, I believe."

Then they sat down round the fire. Lisa looking on the two faces, wondered how her heroic ideal George could find permanent happiness in such companionship.

"My Clara will be very comfortable," said Mrs. Vincent.

"Yes; of course. Mr. Randolph is not poor."

"I do not care about that," said Clara.

"When is the wedding to be?"

"In April."

"And where will you live, Clara?"

"Oh! the Van der Pyls are going away. Mr. Van der Pyl will live at the office with Mr. Travers, and we shall have their house."

The "we" was jarring. Lisa was silent.

In the midst of a harangue from fat Mrs. Vincent, her husband came in.

"Come to congratulate my gal, have you, Miss van Hovenaar? Well, well, I am sure she deserves her happiness, and she has got a good fellow to take care of her."

"You will miss her dreadfully, Mr. Vincent?"

"Miss her! Oh! that isn't the word for it. I don't know what I shall do. I always said I never should let her marry, but these things——"

"Come upon me," said his wife, "without the least expectation."

"Yes, really," said Lisa, dreamily.

"You'll find it so one day," said Vincent.

Lisa smiled.

"However, we could not have chosen anyone we could like better than Randolph if it was to be."

Then Clara asked Lisa to come to see her presents, and lingering over the jewels and the bright ornaments, the two girls spoke their little word.

"I am so glad you have come, Lisa. I wanted to see you so much."

Their eyes met.

"You will be happy, Clara? You must be happy with him."

"Yes. Is that all? I was afraid you might be angry——"

Angry? what a word? does that express impotent suffering?

"And you will make him happy—always—all his life? George wants so much. You will satisfy all?"

"Yes. Is that all?" Clara wondered at her.

"That is all," said Lisa, laughing.

"And you are not angry?"

"Angry? No," and Lisa flung her head up and opened her eyes, marvelling much. Perhaps she really felt angry for the first time then.

"Then you did not care?"

"Care?" repeated Lisa. Some words of her mother's about Clara's being dangerous flashed across her. "Care? No," said she.

"And we will be friends always."

"Friends always," said Lisa aloud, "and so help George always," added she to herself.

After that she went away, and they did not meet again for some time. Clara congratulated herself on her generosity.

"George, shall I ask Lisa to be my bridesmaid?"

He turned his head away.

"I think not."

"Why?"

"Dutch. Better keep to our English friends."

So Lisa was spared that at least, and the weeks flew by, till the bright April morning came when George and Clara were made man and wife.

Lisa did not go to the wedding. Excuses were easily found, and as she leaned upon the gate that led over the pastures to Franewyk she heard the music of the bells ringing out blithely. To herself she pictured it all, and felt thankful she was away.

And in that silent moment, when she stood alone, considering the foolish mistaken past, the late weeks of solitude and dreariness, the future such a monotonous plain of daily sameness, a message of strength seemed to be borne to her from those merry bells. Why, she could not tell, for everything seemed so sad. Her mother was daily getting more feeble, and her blindness was increasing, while her own life seemed to her useless and aimless. Then, too, she had been sorely grieved about Roeland. Letters from the Hague had told her how gay he was, how idle, how frivolous; how he seemed to hate Franewyk,

just as much as he seemed to dislike industry and effort. Was this her doing? had she been thoughtless? could she help it if Roland would care [for her so very much? Ought she to have married him and have helped him to a worthy ambition? Ah! it was no good thinking of that now. She had neglected her duty then, and now he was lost to her for ever. Another opportunity wasted. Another blot in God's book against her. How He and His good angels must despise her now. And the brazen tongues of those joyous bells went on with their merry refrain; the trees over her head seemed to take it and toss it about among their branches. What did they mean — those busy interfering bells?

"Lisa."

She did not move.

"Lisa."

Just an old friend's voice.

Why did she colour, and why did her heart beat so foolishly."

"Lisa!"

Then she turned.

"Roeland."

It was quite absurd, considering how long a time these old friends had been apart, that they had such a difficulty in finding conversation.

They shook hands first; and then they read each other's faces, as though looking for something they had lost, or like people longing for an answer to a question they cannot ask.

After that, the words came in a torrent, too fast for me to write. At least from Roeland.

"And so I ask you again?"

"What with that going on and you knowing all?"

She pointed to the church. The bells were malicious with that great burst of melody they brought to the trees just then.

"Yes, knowing all!" said Roeland imitating her voice, but making a little gesture of contempt, as though it were not much to know.

"Yes! then," said Lisa.

Afterwards he said:

"The bells will ring out for us next, Lisa!"

"That was what they meant I suppose," said she, and she explained to him how she wondered about them before he came.

"Where did you come from?"

"I came from the wedding. You were not there. I came here to find you, my little bride. Don't let us be long Lisa; let us be married and away before they come back. Please me in this!"

He was hardly pleading even then.

Lisa smiled.

"You and my mother shall settle it!"

CHAPTER XIII.

"'Twould kill me what would cure my pain."
SHELLEY.

GUY TRAVERS, once having decided to write to his father on the all-important subject of the existence of an elder half-brother, was not long in endeavouring to carry out that decision. In endeavouring, I say—for, the pen in his hand, he found it no easy matter to compose the letter. It was a delicate subject, and to ask his father of all people in the world, who was just now encompassed with difficulties and pecuniary perplexities, was a task at once unpleasant and perhaps foolish. That very evening after the interview with Mrs. Lord, as he sat

over the fire in the house by the sea, with the pen between his fingers and the paper and ink tacitly inviting him to decision, he felt in a hundred minds about it.

Guy had always been so much in the dark about that early passage in his father's life, he felt a repugnance to approach it now. That there had been something, they had all known; but it was vague and uncertain, and for that father's sake, curiosity had never been encouraged. Could it have been a marriage? a secret, unacknowledged marriage? And then Guy pictured to himself that father—so handsome, so aristocratic, passionate, but the very soul of honour, and proud to a degree. Oh no! youthful folly there might have been, sins of thoughtlessness and impulse—but not a selfish system of calculation, not a mean screening of self and a condemnation to misery of a human being when duty pointed in another direction, not long years of dishonourable subterfuge; Guy struck his hand on the table, and swore that his father could not have done this thing.

Saltichus *his* son? Oh no! it could not be!

That there had been a son, Guy knew was a fact, but no legitimate one, and the one there was had died. His father had said so one night carelessly—it had slipped from him casually in conversation; Guy remembered now how relieved he had felt when he heard it. It was after his father had endeavoured again—the last of many such efforts, to find this lost child, that the news of the death had come to him. It was almost absurd of Guy thinking about it, or letting such a wild idea as identity trouble him; it was only that there was one parallel circumstance in the stories, and that was the running away! Guy's father had never liked the child, and he had run away. So had Saltichus!

There could have been no marriage! Would the rightful heir to a fine old property ever run away? and that knowingly; for if there were any truth in it, the mother would have been sure to instil the knowledge into the child's mind! Could his father

have lived all these years among his other children so contentedly if such a sword hung over his head ?

Then came the thought,

"But he thought him dead!"

Guy thought, with a sort of half-shudder, of the too evident exultation which his father had in vain endeavoured to repress when he had spoken of the boy's death. Then Guy nerved himself to write, and tried again.

"A poor inheritance it is, now to fight over. Surely, if living, he would prefer no claim! Could hatred lead him to it, I wonder ?"

Guy wished he could write to the lawyer instead, but, after all, that would be telling another person, and Guy's first duty was to his father.

"My dear father," he began, and then the thought struck him, "had Saltichus a right to begin so too ?" He waited for half and hour before he went on, and then straggled over three sides of the paper about the harbour, the weather, Holland, finally

signed himself and wrote a postscript. "By the way, am I not right in fancying that all danger of any claim being made upon you is at an end by the death of the possible claimant? answer me this!"

"Like a woman! a subterfuge, and as unworthy of him as of myself. He is man enough to hear a plain question and to answer it. What a fool I am!"

The letter was thrown into the fire.

It was not till a week after that the following note was despatched:

"My dear Father,

"Excuse me for raking up an old grievance, or opening an old sore, but my anxiety is my plea. There is an old story relating to the family about another son. He is dead, is he not? Tell me if you have proof undeniable, or whether any trouble could ever be anticipated from him if existing?

"Your affectionate son,

"Guy Travers."

This short note was the work of time, and was thus ultimately revised and shortened that it hardly expressed his full meaning. Guy was at once too confident in his father's uprightness, too sensitive on the subject of his honour, and too careful of his feelings, to write more plainly.

Here is the answer he got:

"My dear Boy,

"Much learning has made you mad! I put this slip in your mother's letter. She won't read it. Yes. Dead . . . . as a door-nail! That was a sad chapter in my life. Closed now—for ever. Don't refer to it again. I do not like it. You could not help it, but don't dwell on it, or somebody—*is* somebody trying to set up a claim? (not much now-a-days for them to lay claim to! I wish them God speed).

"*If existing*, you say. You are certainly mad! I have no more proof than the letter from a person in whose house he lodged, to say that he was dead, and when I sent funds

for the funeral, I got a receipt. I have those two documents still—somewhere. He, poor fellow, or the worms either, are hardly likely to want them now. You stick to your harbour. When are you coming home? Don't rake up more ghosts. I don't like it.

"Your affectionate father,

"HUBERT TRAVERS."

So that was all Guy got for it, and just then a press of work coming to him, which lasted, more or less, far into the summer, when Randolph came back at last after rather a lengthy honeymoon trip with his bride from England, prevented his having leisure to dream over his terrors or suspicions.

One evening—it was when they had all come back, and they were standing together in the conservatory at Bloemenhof, for there had been a dinner-party there to inaugurate the new positions they were henceforth to hold towards each other, and Roeland was twisting some heather in his young wife's hair, from which occupation she was laugh-

ingly entreating him to desist—Clara Randolph was talking to Guy, when Saltichus, also one of the guests, said suddenly to Roeland :

"Where did you get that plant from, Franckenburg? It grows nowhere in Holland, I am sure?"

"Travers gave it me. It comes from England."

"Yes. I thought so."

"It grows wild in Lincolnshire," said Guy.

"I know—yes ; and nowhere else wild."

Their eyes met for one moment, and the old senseless feeling of fear and hatred came over Guy that he had experienced on the very first day that he met him.

Well; it was no use. He must shake it off; his father said he did not like it!

After that he tried to make a friend of Saltichus, to find out something either to justify his suspicions or to condemn them to oblivion, but the doctor proved a very eel, always wriggling away from the point, or

from any leading question, however artfully veiled, successfully. Poor Guy was his mouse, and he was the cat, and never mouse hated puss's glittering eyes more than did Guy those glistening orbs with which Saltichus threw such wonderful all-seeing glances everywhere.

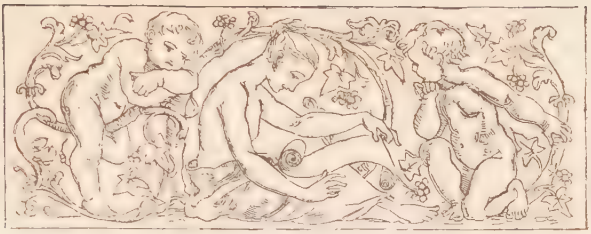
All this while Saltichus' popularity was steadily on the increase; he was still somewhat of a mystery, but people had begun to accept the fact, and to overlook it. At Roeland's table he became a frequent guest; everyone said he was clever and amusing. Lisa herself delighted in his conversation, and smiled at him gratefully when she saw him interesting Roeland in abstruse questions, and making him employ that mind which Lisa always feared would rust from disuse. Guy, who did not care to be excluded from society, had to learn to smile on him too.

That summer Franewyk was quite gay. There were all sorts of parties and gatherings to welcome the brides, who, considering that they represented two women who had each

married the wrong man, received their happiness with good grace, and went beaming about, scattering smiles and exhibiting pretty toilettes in amusing competition.

Guy, the friend of everyone, found himself welcome everywhere, and his life was spent between the two extremes of work and pleasure. He had his own especial room at Bloemenhof, for Lisa told Roeland it was so bad for him to be so much away at that lonely house by the sea, listening to the boom of the waves: and he had a room at the Randolph's ménage, for Clara agreed with her husband, it would be so handy for him to be able to put up there when he liked.

Such were their lives just then. Outwardly all pleasure and smiles, friendly offices and mutual kindnesses; like the sea, soft and glistening in the sunshine, flashing smiles now here, now there—but what storms lay beneath the surface! . . . . They know best who have lived the longest.



CHAPTER XIV.

"A Briton, even in love, should be
A subject, not a slave."

WORDSWORTH.

GEORGE RANDOLPH had learned to look upon himself now as a prosperous man. Every morning as he rose he thanked God for His mercies, and set his shoulder to the wheel with double the energy that he used to put into his work in the old days. Now he had a wife to work for; now he had a home to brighten and beautify, and some one he loved to welcome him. He began to believe in his good fortune, could look for that lucky star which must certainly have shone on his birth, and had faith now in the fact that prosperity and

the fickle goddess had set themselves to watch over his interests. He was more confident in his star and in his fortune, you see, than in himself; believed more implicitly in his fate than in his own strength, and forgot, all the while that he bowed his head to the necessity of effort, that it was that very humility, and his energy in acting up to it, that ensured him success. With Clara—as with his profession—his very faithfulness and the importunity of his love had won her, and though she had married him because it had seemed to her the best thing she could do, yet if she had not felt so sure of his affection, she might have hesitated longer ere she had risked it.

As he watched her, occupied with her coquettish little pieces of feminine work, he would smile to himself, and wonder how it was that such beauty and such talent could really have come to love him. When he came home in the evening and found some fresh proof of artistic arrangement in the house, the work of her deft fingers, he was

enchanted, and was lost in admiration of her unfailing resources and energy.

Clara both played and sang well, and as in the old days, after dreary hours of calculation, it had been Randolph's greatest refreshment to go to Meerfleet, and there, silent, buried deep in the soft cushions of a sofa, with shaded lamps and flickering firelight, to listen to song and melody, one after another—so now, he looked forward day after day to the old sweet airs, doubly sweet as sung by Clara's voice,—softly lingering on the memory as played by Clara's expressive fingers.

Often too tired to talk—much too tired to read, this soft music just suited him. It suited Clara, too. Conversation was apt to flag, for the aspirations were silenced now; who dreams of the future when the distant ideal has changed its face to that of the living present? Dreams are silenced too, when the day they figured in has dawned. And Randolph fancied—in that listless langour of his after toil — that silence means sympathy, a perfect understanding when hearts are of each

other sure, when passing moments tell of thoughts unspoken, and passing smiles of love unchanged.

When sometimes Clara, rousing herself and struggling against the apathy that seemed to her to be growing upon them both—for she had no share in his larger interests and aims —when she roused herself to tell him of what she had done in the day, he listened smiling. There was nothing of great interest, and she was so sure that all she did was right.

Clara's beauty alone satisfied Randolph now; he had admired her talent in former days, but there was no room or place for it in married life. In society it is an ornament, in love-making it is delicious and winning beyond all things, but at home, as a daily continuance, where it makes a daily want, it is discordant and tiring.

Besides, too, Clara's cleverness, except her music, was not attainment, was not calm, was not power; there was no poetry, no conviction, no truth about it. It was restlessness. It was divers wants; charming when you

are fresh and strong, and ready to do battle with armies in bright array, but alarming when the day's toil is over, your strength is spent, and the night is at hand.

A doll who could dress herself and lisp out correct orders for a good dinner was in fact all he needed now. A busy man should not marry a clever wife, unless indeed he can provide her with a profession also: for when he is exhausted, his partner is still fresh, and meeting with no competition, no sympathy, no outcome or vent for her superabundant energy, she feels vexed and dissatisfied, restless and dull. But George knew it not; she had books to read, and she was so clever, so busy, it was impossible she could be dull.

She took long drives and rides and walks, but always alone. Long days they were and always alone.

George forgot that.

After all, who was there she could care very much about; would she not much rather be alone? She could not be always going to Lisa. The De Franckenburgs were always

kind, said they were always charmed to see her, but still, to want companionship seemed derogatory to Clara's dignity. She could not be always going there, and she could not go to Meerfleet every day.

George had asked Clara to go among the workmen's families for him a little, and she had promised she would. As yet she had not been; but then at first in a new house one is always so busy.

And that oft-recurring word "busy" made George forget more than ever how often Clara was alone. If he ever thought it, he always remembered that answer so vividly, that he dismissed the thought at once.

It was a pity!

As his first thought in the morning was thankfulness to Providence for mercies received, meaning Clara principally, and the success attending the works generally, so her daily first thought was a mixture of placid despair, and of wonder what Providence meant her to do next. She had so much strength and energy over.—She was not lame or ill;

could not even sleep for many minutes in the day consecutively. What was she to do?

Clara Randolph was just now in that frame of mind that she would go with any stream that might happen to flow past her doors, whether it flowed towards good or towards evil. Just anything for excitement or amusement, or, indeed, for occupation. In the long summer days she would stand leaning on her elbows, staring out over the pasture lands, looking at the sky and the cows, wondering why she and they were put there; or, thrumming on the window-sill, she would look very vacant and purposeless in all her beauty—just like a child looking out hour after hour of the nursery window, because it is too young to have any work to do. Most women are children all their lives, and cannot choose or reject anything for their own ultimate good. All results are too far off for them to see; the present only is within their reach. If any one had appeared to her on any of those days, he would have been to her a God, and he might have done with her as he listed. But there

was no one to appear—not even a house, except indeed Dr. Saltichus', just peeping out from the trees.

How different this from the picture Clara had drawn to herself of married life! how different, how dull; to be shut up alone—waiting only for George Randolph.

But she did not complain. She could not tell the man she had never loved him, and that waiting for him, even with the certainty that he would come, was not all-sufficient!

One evening a sudden gleam of enlightenment came to him.

He had come back from the office, and he was, if possible, more elated, more confident of success than usual. Mr. Bradlaw and Mr. Bennett had both complimented him, a faltering message had been conveyed to him from Government, and Guy—faithful old Guy!—had clapped him on the shoulder as they parted, saying: "Victory is ours at last. We may hoist our flag now as soon as we like. You have got the game in your own hands, and they will all bow down to you and salute you 'Genius!'"

Randolph was justly proud, and he came home longing to go over it with his wife, to tell it all to her, and to see her glad smiles and looks of self-congratulation and approval.

Clara was not downstairs; Annchen, her maid, said she was gone to dress for dinner. Randolph was surprised, for it was still early; however he took up his paper and waited patiently.

Then Travers came unexpectedly; he wanted to talk, he said, and when, rather late, Randolph went to his dressing-room, Clara had gone down, and was perhaps, thought the fond husband, like a good Dutch housewife, giving some extra touch to the dinner for the sake of their guest.

As dinner was announced in walked Clara. But not Clara herself—was it? Who was this? A strange fantastic figure it was.

George saw it all in a moment.

Clara had dyed her beautiful dark hair. Golden locks and black eyebrows constituted a result as decidedly jarring and loathsome to

Randolph as anything she could in her utmost ingenuity have devised.

Guy saw the look of disgust and amazement on Randolph's face; then quickly he turned to his hostess.

She was standing there, waiting, just by the lamp, a mixture of humility and defiance.

"Admire me," was the word her gesture denoted.

And then Randolph understood it — the egregious vanity, the vulgarity of the taste, the shamelessness of the exhibition.

"How do you do, Mrs. Randolph?" said Guy, advancing towards her, and pretending not to notice the hair, or the ridiculous effect of it.

His own name jarred upon George. It seemed disgraced. He was so innately honest he could not bear this.

Absurd squeamishness, of course, in this nineteenth century; but perhaps a few more such men would teach reason in their generation, and do the blasé faded old world good.

"Good heavens! Clara, what have you done to yourself?"

She threw an indignant glance at him with her gleaming black eyes. They looked spiteful and fierce just then. However, she smiled:

"Well, don't you like it?"

"Like it! my wife to make a guy of herself like that!"

A choking sense of wounded feeling rose in her throat. This before Mr. Travers, and this the end of her afternoon's toil! . . She herself knew it became her: George was a bear.

"Shall we go to dinner?" asked she heroically, concealing her anger.

For one half second he was going to cede; he hated making a scene before Travers—he hated rebuking her before anyone—but he could not follow her into the other room like that; he could not sit at the table with that painted bedizened thing before him.

"Go to dinner!" thundered he. "No! we will wait. Go and wash off that stuff."

"But—George—" she began meekly. She had never seen him angry before. It was not pleasant.

"Don't provoke me!" said he.

And then he strode across the room and held the door open for her.

"You had better not wait," said she, smiling. "It will be an age coming off. In fact, I don't know that——"

"Why did you do it?"

They looked very seriously at one another. Strong contrasts they were. Guy stood listening, wondering how it would end. Were Randolph's eyes going to be opened to her nature at last? Was the veil to be torn off now? An unwelcome revelation, if so.

"Why did you do it?"

"For something to do," said she, sullenly.

"For something to do! Good God!"

A look of abject pity crossed his intellectual face.

"For something to do!" he repeated again, as though he could not believe it. "Where did you get the—stuff—from?"

"In Amsterdam. The day you left me to wait for you at the hairdresser's. A fair woman passed the window with dark eyebrows. She looked so well, I wished I was fair, too, and so I dyed my hair."

"A full confession, Mrs. Randolph!" said Guy, cheerily, "and deserves full forgiveness."

Guy thought less seriously of paint and dye than George Randolph. He was more used to it.

She held out her hand timidly to George; she even brought her brow near to his face for the kiss of pardon; never had that action on her part failed yet.

George just touched her fingers lightly with his, but he could not bring his lips into contact with that stained brow, it went against his whole nature.

"Go, dear. We will wait."

"Women are so different," said Guy to him when the door was shut and she had gone. "They don't see as we do."

"So different," exclaimed George. "I wonder if they know right from wrong?"

"Eh, come. You are putting their morality at rather a low ebb."

"Well, I mean they do what they are told."

"The hairdresser probably told her it would look nice, and, as to look nice is a woman's first duty, your wife probably thought she could not please you better than by doing it."

"Please me! Good Heavens!"

"You must not be too severe, George."

"But—such an answer! For something to do!"

The words seemed to jar extraordinarily on the busy man, who was accustomed to look forward with such intense pleasure to idle days of holiday.

After allowing him a certain time for a brown study and painful meditation, Guy changed the subject of thought, and they fell into brisk talk about their harbour.

In half an hour Clara had not come back, and seeing Guy glance impatiently at the

clock, Randolph put his hand on the bell and ordered dinner.

As though he did not notice her absence, they went in together, and he was taking his seat when the thought seemed to strike him.

"One second, Guy," said he, and he tore away upstairs, taking three steps at a time.

There a pretty sight awaited him. Clara with her head over a basin, her dress spoilt, and the obstinate dye sticking in streaks to her hair.

"Oh, George!" she began.

"Are you ready?" said he.

"Still angry," thought she to herself, and down went her head into the basin again.

"Travers and I cannot wait any longer. Will you come?"

"What! like this?"

"Yes; like that."

"How pleasant you are, George."

The maid looked terrified at the bare idea of her mistress going down like that.

"Your own fault," said he.

"I cannot really come like this," said she. She said it rebelliously. Had she really found her match? Was this the man she had meant to twist round her little finger? would she, Clara Vincent, really have to knock under to him?

"You will come!" said he.

It was very quickly said, but there was an ugly light in his eye, and really he looked rather handsome so.

"What a pity I never loved him!" thought she. Now it was so hard to wheedle him into submission. She fancied vaguely that true love would have made her all-powerful. A feeling something like respect began to creep into her mind as she looked at him. Surely now he understood her—understood that she had never loved him—that she had married him out of pique, and understood now her real nature. How he must despise her!

"Come!" said he, impatiently.

It was like Roeland used to speak.

"Very well!" said she, in sudden anger. The old anger against Roeland, the new feeling of fear of Randolph, and the well-known feeling of smothered hatred because she had married him, and had put it into his power to lord it over her. "Here I am."

"And ridiculous enough you look," said he, boldly. He could afford to laugh, now that she acknowledged his right, and bowed to his power.

They went down to dinner silently, and Guy stood up as she passed him.

"You will excuse my appearance," said she laughingly to him, still with streaks and ominous shades about her head.

"In the cause of beauty, as in the cause of art and science, one excuses everything."

Harmony outwardly restored, the ball of conversation was kept up lightly, and Guy went to his slumbers forgetting that he had witnessed any conjugal difference at all.

"Hadn't you better ask Mr. Travers not to say anything about it?" asked Clara of her husband later.

"What, don't you know old Guy yet? Is it likely he could say anything?"

Randolph spoke with some contempt.

No. They were both too high natures for her to know thoroughly. She did not understand either yet. She only thought then how Guy must despise her too.

"Mr. Travers," said she, coaxingly, and blushing prettily, next morning, when he was waiting for Randolph, "my little freak of dressing up last night was very silly. You won't tell anyone?"

"Extremely silly," thought he to himself, the more so as the streaks showed ominously in the morning light.

He looked at her curiously, opening his merry blue eyes upon her uplifted anxious face. Then he tossed his head in the air:

"What do you take me for, Mrs. Randolph?" grumbled he. "I am neither a town-crier, nor a lazy, good-for-nothing servant to spend my time in gossiping about my neighbours' affairs. Especially, should I say anything that would do you harm?"

"I beg your pardon."

"For goodness' sake, don't let us fight about it," and he took her hand impulsively. "Believe me, Mrs. Randolph, your beauty is such that extraneous aids can only mar it. Rest content with what nature has done for you."

As Clara watched them driving away, George to go to Amsterdam with Mr. Vincent, Guy to go down to the office, she made up her mind about them:

"Slightly fools, both of them, in their different ways."

CHAPTER XV.

"Alas! the unquiet life did tingle
From mine own heart through every vein,
Like a captive in dreams of liberty,
Who beats the walls of his stony cell."

SHELLEY.

THE road to the harbour was a footway and a line of rails along which the trollies ran. It is curious scenery; sand hills, long bents of grass, blocks of stone piled up on each side of the road, and bright flowers growing here and there. Beyond is the sea—very smooth and shining to-day. Guy Travers walked along swiftly, full of thought and calculation, and sometimes letting his mind wonder at the energy and marvellous determination of the people

amongst whom he had come to live, who have fought inch by inch for their country and have wrested it so successfully from the encroachments of the sea. "Thus far and no farther" in truth they say, and year by year they push old Neptune back, and add to their wealth by the diminution of his empire. This harbour was of course a different thing; it was the work of English energy and English enterprise, but when, half done, English capital had threatened cessation, then Dutch assistance had been eagerly offered.

Suddenly the sound of soft bells jangling, struck on Guy's ear, and, stopping to listen, he soon recognized the low-toned bells worn by the pair of small ponies that Lisa van Franckenburg usually drove. Dutch ladies are early risers; Guy wondered whither she could be bound at this time of day. The bank being lower just there, he climbed up, and peering over saw the carriage driving along to Ryssenwyk; it was running parallel with him to his right.

"To Vrouw Krusemann, I'll be bound," said he to himself. "I'll go and wish her good morning. It won't take me ten minutes."

Bounding over the uneven ground, he struck out across country, and arrived at the farm to find the carriage being driven up and down. The mistress had gone into the house.

Lisa was standing in the warm sunlight. It flickered down on her bright face, and to Guy she looked the picture of health and happiness. So, too, seemed to think Vrouw Krusemann, who was overwhelming her young lord's wife with pretty speeches and praise.

Lisa, in fact, felt very happy. It was her first visit as proprietress to the old woman, and it was coming to her, with the burst of sunshine, how much good she could do in her new position—how much of her people's happiness she held in her power.

The old boer was out in the fields, and Vrouw Krusemann's tongue wagged finely.

Lisa must look here, and Lisa must look there. She must admire the cheeses, the butter, the bright china, the cleanliness, order, and somewhat artistic arrangement of it all. The maidens went in and out, going to and fro in their work, the poultry peered about now in the yard, now venturing nearer—the carts and waggons standing about, the voices of the men, the calm glorious sunlight over all, the bits of colour around her, and the kindly heart of the dear old woman standing by her, made her feel more at home, more at peace, than almost ever before; there was something very like a tear of sentiment trembling in her eye-lid as Guy came up. In at the other door, a cow put her mild face, and Lisa said she felt she was a connection and a belonging at once.

Vrouw Krusemann welcomed Travers with effusion; he was one of her favourites:

"Ah! you are faithless, Mr. Travers," said Lisa. "Are you never coming to Bloemenhof again? Where were you last night?"

"With Randolph!" said Guy, laughing, and thinking to himself what a contrast there was between his two hostesses.

"Ah! were you? I was just going there!"

"Really—so early?"

Guy did not want her to go just then.

"She will be up, I suppose?"

"Up, yes! But . . . ."

"Oh! you must let me go, my friend. I have failed in my duty signally. I ought to have been before!"

"Not to-day," pleaded he.

To tell the truth he was thinking of that dyed hair.

"Why?"

"Randolph isn't there."

"So much the better! At least . . . . ." she checked herself—and coloured. Then looked at him to see if she had betrayed herself.

But Guy was stroking the cow.

"Oh yes! I know that ladies like their talks undisturbed, men are dreadfully in the way.

Vrouw Krusemann, won't you give me a glass of milk?"

The old woman made a thousand apologies for her forgetfulness, but she had been so taken up in looking at the carriage and the ponies—they told her they were English, and she clasped her hands:

"Mijn Gott!" said she. "And the bells—the sweet pretty silver bells?"

"They are Dutch!"

Then she clapped her hands together and laughed aloud—

"Ah, that was right. *They* are Dutch, at least!"

"Will you come and dine to-night, Mr. Travers? We have some gentlemen with us. Roeland's friends — from the Hague?"

He accepted, smiling, and she stepped into her carriage. Just then they saw two figures approaching, Lisa's sharp eyes descried them first.

"It is Mrs. Lord and Doctor Saltichus," said she.

"That is not Doctor Saltichus," said Vrouw Krusemann, shading the sun from her eyes with her hand.

"Not? oh! it must be?"

"Has she another friend then?"

"There is no harm in Jane Lord," said the old woman.

"Oh, no! I know you and your husband have always stood by her," said Guy.

"And quite right, too," said Lisa. "I wish Baron Roeland would let me befriend her better, but——"

She stopped, for the subject of their conversation was near.

It was not Dr. Saltichus. Vrouw Krusemann was quite right. The new comer was a dark swarthy man, but younger than Saltichus.

Mrs. Lord curtsied as she came up to them, and smilingly addressed Guy:

"Here is a young man, sir, come from Amsterdam. I can't make out what he wants, excepting Mr. Randolph, sir. He doesn't speak good Dutch; I only understand good Dutch."

"I suppose you mean, Mrs. Lord, only Dutch people who can speak a little English as well, and help you along. Eh?" said Lisa good-humouredly.

"Well; perhaps that's it, my lady," answered Jane. She had the very vaguest notions how a Baroness should be addressed in her own language.

"Mr. Randolph is in Amsterdam," said Guy.

Then the stranger began to talk volubly, a mixture of Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese. There was very little English. Guy, whose Dutch was of the most elementary description, was helpless, and entreated for Lisa's help.

Vrouw Krusemann, too, listened intently, and ultimately they discovered that he was engaged in the Diamond Cutting Establishment in Amsterdam, and that he wished to leave it. Having heard of Mr. Randolph, he had come to see him to ask for work on the harbour.

"But if you cannot speak English, my

good man, you will never understand us, and we shall never get on."

Oh! he would soon learn it; he had learnt many languages in his time. Once, too, he had known English—for he had known an Englishman—and the man frowned at the remembrance as though he had hated him.

"Your pay would be trifling in comparison?"

He did not care for pay; he wanted work, independence, liberty in the free air of heaven.

Lisa felt half afraid of him as she translated his words, and she and Vrouw Krusemann exchanged looks expressing hopes that he would never be employed near them.

Guy took down his name and address, said he would speak to Mr. Randolph, and regretted his absence. Then the man asked for Mr. Vincent, and Guy was surprised that he knew so much about them.

"Mr. Vincent," said Guy, "had more to do with the reclamations of land, less with the harbour."

"Ah! that would not suit," said the man. "He must have work near the sea."

"Ask him if he knows Dr. Saltichus," said Guy, thinking here might be a key to their mystery.

But the shaft was useless; the name seemed totally unknown to him.

Then they parted; the man touched his cap and walked off in the direction of the station, and Lisa went on her way to "Vrouw Clara," as she explained to the old farmer's wife. Guy stood for a moment to question Mrs. Lord. English, Vrouw Krusemann could not understand.

"Mrs. Lord, every new comer seems to anchor first with you. How did you pick up that strange specimen?"

"Well, sir; I'll tell you. I was in low spirits this morning somehow, though I hardly know why, except that I dreamed last night again that John was dead, and I went out by myself, not to do anything, but because it was so bright and sunny, and the sea looked so tempting like, and there seemed so much

life and stir outside. The days are long, you see, sir, when your neighbours won't talk to one. And I was standing there, leaning over the hand-rail, looking down into the water, when a step behind me sent my heart into my mouth. I have often wondered if any of them would do me a hurt—do you think they would, sir?"

"No; not a soul, Mrs. Lord. They are only foolish, and can't understand . . . ."

"Well, sir; I turned and looked, and there was this man there waiting to speak. He touched his hat, and didn't seem to know how to begin, so after his mumbling something I couldn't understand, I said—for I thought he wanted me naturally, and it was in my mind, as usual, that it was the sign from John coming so—I always do think I shall get it from some outlandish-looking man from furrin' parts."

"Well, Mrs. Lord?"

"So, all innocent like, I just said: 'I'm Mrs. Lord; Jane Lord.' Lor, sir! you should have seen him, sir. Wouldn't you, sir, if you

saw a dummy standing there behind you, sir, think he was wanting you ?"

"Yes; I suppose I should."

"Well! then he flew out upon me. And I heard something like 'success' among a hundred other words, and 'Vendetta,' 'Vendetta.' That came so often. Please, sir, what can that mean ?"

"That means revenge. The man must be mad! You are sure you have never seen him before ? And yet, Mrs. Lord," said Guy, jocularly changing his tone, "he—why how pale you are—that is nonsense, you know, about revenge, if you have never done him any harm. He must be an old lover of yours. You did seem to be getting on very well together when you came here ?"

Mrs. Lord's colour came back again.

"Yes, sir: after that he calmed down. He said something about a Vrouw, as if it was a term of contempt, and then I heard a word between his teeth that sounded like "Patience!"

"It is very curious," mused Guy. "I

think you had better not tell Vrouw Krusemann," added he, smiling on the old lady.

"Oh! thank you, sir," said Jane glibly, "I'm sick of secrets. I see too well what they lead to. I am just going to tell her all —my last night's dream and all—and too glad, sir, to have some one to tell, as far as we can understand each other. My duty to you, sir, all the same."

So Guy, laughing at the wilfulness of women, took his leave, and went on at last to the office, where he found Heer van der Pyl, in a dreadful state of perturbation at the odd stranger, who had been walking about there all the morning, surveying the harbour, the divers, and the dredging operations with the greatest interest. He was waiting for Heer Randolph, he said, and Heer van der Pyl had not liked to take upon himself to send him away.

"So Mrs. Lord was a God-send," laughed Guy.

"As you say, Travers—she must have

been sent by God for me," said the pious Dutchman.

Lisa meanwhile had driven on to discharge her neighbourly duty towards Clara, and as she entered, found her in her accustomed place in the drawing-room, thrumming with her fingers on the window-sill, and looking out over the pastures to Dr. Saltichus's house.

As Lisa entered, Clara turned:

"Good heavens, Clara, what have you done to yourself?" exclaimed Lisa, as she took her hand.

Now Clara had for the moment forgotten her streaked head of hair. Mr. Travers was gone. Who else would she see? What did it matter? who else did she ever see?

Now, both hands went up to her head in sudden shame, and she burst into an hysterical fit of laughter.

"Oh! my dear friend . . . ."

"It is a very bad sign, Clara, when such as you and I begin to forget our appearance," said Lisa, with comic gravity.

"I . . . I did it for something to do."

"Not really that?" said Lisa, pained. "Anything better than that. Say it was vanity, an experiment, an idea it would become you. Or say it was a little of both."

"Perhaps it was—a little of both," said Clara, beginning to think.

"Not for something to do. George Randolph's wife . . . . and——" then poor Lisa stopped, and turned her head away out of window. It was so hard upon her; she had sacrificed everything, never murmured or uttered any warning as she would so dearly have loved to do—all for the sake of his happiness, and now, on her first visit to his home, to find—this!

"George Randolph at least would not let his wife stay so," said Clara, laughing. "He had no faith in my knowledge of art, and bade me wash it off at once. Hence . . . . the result!" She pointed to her head with a comic gesture of distress.

"But you are not dull, Clara? not really."

She had an intense craving to know something of the inner life of that man and woman.

And Clara was on the brink of confession; all the misery, all the bitter disappointment, all the dulness of life, all the yearning and intense longing for life and movement, for society, for sympathy: all the restless ambition to have the world (or Roeland) at her feet—all this was going to be spread before Lisa's eyes, when suddenly she remembered herself. "Roeland's wife! Roeland's wife to know that she had suffered!"

She would never have understood, have never believed if she had understood, how gently Lisa would have listened to all (save to the dreams about Roeland), how she would never have told Roeland, and how she would have set herself to heal the sores, and bring Clara and her husband back to happiness, for the sake of that old worship of hers for George.

Since marriage Lisa and Randolph had met but seldom; never once alone face to

face, to speak a sincere word for each other's ears. Words there had been, but only for the world, for Roeland and for Clara to hear. Words with a false ring about them, and bearing no message of comfort from the speakers.

More than ever Lisa was convinced now that George had never cared for her. She only sheltered herself the more completely under Roeland's wing, but never lost the thought of being a faithful friend to George in consequence.

Unlike Clara in this, who rang the changes as she sang "Vendetta" against Roeland to herself all day.

"Not really dull?" repeated Lisa.

"Dull, no!" answered Clara. "One wet afternoon when I was alone for a wonder, in the spirit of mischief I did it!"

"Ah!" breathed Lisa relieved.

Then Lisa changed the subject of conversation, told her of Schevening where she and Roeland had lately been—told her of the sea bathing, and the gay crowds there—praised

Roeland, and said how clever men gathered round him—said too how proud it made her. From that to the Hague—of a play lately written, of a speech lately made, and of music in the wood last Sunday.

It was the breath of life to Clara.

That was what she wanted—gay crowds, clever men, praise—music—light—life.

So at last to the poor diamond-cutter they had seen that morning, and then saying she hoped Mr. Randolph would not employ him for all their sakes, for he looked dangerous, Lisa got up and bade her good-bye—went swiftly, ringing those sweet-toned bells, taking as it seemed to Clara all the light away with her, and leaving a great blank behind.

"It is easy for Lisa to be contented!" sighed Clara to herself, returning to her window, her cows and the trees. "She has everything now, and a glorious out-look by-and-by. Beauty and popularity, and to make a great man of her husband. Oh! Roeland, my love! my love, Roeland!"

At that moment she honestly thought Roeland was the one love of her life! Not a bit of it! It was his position, his wealth—the halo of brightness that shone around him, more than he himself. Divested of that, where would he have been in her regard? Take away his title—bring the chrysalis, the poor plain chrysalis before it has put on its bright wings and the splendour of its frivolous array, and would she care? Butterfly Roeland is another affair altogether.

Clara could not bear to be in the shade. She had always dreamed of conquests, of success—who was there to conquer in this wood? A Dutch cow looked up at her as she asked herself the question. She forgot as she foresaw that future of Lisa's—to make a great man of Roeland, to urge him to make a career, and to have his name in men's mouths—that her husband also was a great man—greater far than the other. Labour and up-hill toil have thousands of difficulties that such as Roeland, in his statesman's

philosophy, could not dream of; labour, too often in the shade, often opposed, and often accredited to another. And yet—had he not triumphed? was not his name in men's mouths? had it not been echoed through the length and breadth of Holland? and had it not been re-echoed back with reverberations from England's shores where his countrymen were justly proud of him—and loved to share his triumph! Ah! dogged industry and energy overcoming ignorance, meanness, and idleness, power thus coupled with genius, is greatness far transcending evanescent brilliancy, such as Roeland possessed. But Clara was too young to see it.

Yet each man was fitted for the place for which Providence had disposed him.

A ring at the door-bell made Clara start. Restless and purposeless, she forgot her dignity and went out into the hall to see.

A dark foreign-looking man stood there. The clematis twined down from the porch over his head; he put out his hand to pluck

it. Seeing Clara, he stopped and took off his hat instead.

A handsome strange-looking creature he was.

Clara stepped towards him.

"Vrouw Randolph?" said he with great humility.

"Ja," said she, wondering if she were to speak Dutch or English—and then, thinking she had better keep to English, added "Yes."

"Yes?" said he, imitating her, though with a soft lingering pronunciation.

"The diamond cutter," thought she, and felt alarmed as she remembered Lisa's warning.

She put her hand on the bell—and in the midst of a voluble harangue from the stranger, Fritz, their Dutch servant, appeared.

"Tell me, Fritz, what he says?" Listlessly she listened—she liked the man's face.

"Better send him away, mijn Vrouw; I do not understand."

"No—don't send him away."

So the difficult conversation went on.

"Wants a place at the harbour."

Clara began to take a fancy to the man. There was a sympathy in that eager hungry face. It was like herself. She was always eager and hungry now—devoured by a restless craving. He wanted work. So did she. He could have it . . . . .

"Tell him your master is away. Offer him something to eat."

The man would have nothing to eat. He bowed before Clara, and asked for work.

She smiled, promised she would do her best. He thanked her, asked if he might take a flower from her door. Clara smiled again—thought him strange—plucked the clematis herself and gave it him.

The man laughed, pointed to Clara's face —murmured something about diamonds, and bowed as he went away.

"What did he say, Fritz?"

"He said that diamonds were very beautiful, and flowers very beautiful, but that mijn Vrouw needed neither for her beauty."

Clara went in and sang to herself. She felt pleased and happy.

The man's speech had dispelled the gnawing thoughts of envy and ambition which Lisa's visit had inspired.

CHAPTER XVI.

"For youthful faults ripe virtues shall atone;
Re-seated on thy throne,
Proof shalt thou furnish that misfortune, pain,
And sorrow, have confirm'd thy native right to reign."

WORDSWORTH.

AS Lisa van Franckenburg drove herself home, and as she went over in her mind Clara Randolph's looks and words, she could not help the thought coming into her mind that her neighbour was not happy, and she wondered to herself if something might not be done.

That evening, as Guy Travers sat by her at dinner at Bloemenhof, she had made up her mind to ask him about the domestic life

of the Randolphs. It was so difficult for her to meet them in the same way as she could meet other people; those early chapters of her acquaintance with Randolph always recurred so vividly to her mind when she saw him.

But though Guy was sitting beside her, it was not easy to find an opportunity to introduce the subject.

Her mother, who had been induced at last to leave Lindehout and to come to live at Bloemenhof, required her constant attention, and her guests thought no conversation was perfect, no idea ready for dismissal, till their charming hostess had smiled on it, or had contributed her sanction or disapproval.

Brightly set out were both table and apartment—the rich furniture and valuable pictures, the velvet hangings and the glittering array of silver, imparted an air of comfort and luxury to the whole. Smiles sat on every brow, the contents of the brightly-coloured glasses oft lifted to the lips of the guests soon loosened their tongues, and soft words and

witty sayings flowed around in a continuous stream.

At last, when the more important part of the feast was over, and the servants had gone, the conversation took a more personal turn. Roeland had been holding forth on art,—Nature was the great mistress, he said; and after that, when some one had extolled human power and human genius, the Count van Rosenhagen had added contemptuously:

"Human power! ah! it is poor; it is limited. After all, my friends, I often think, are we better than the brutes? How little our mind helps us, if our body is suffering? Are we not quite dreadfully the victims of feeling? if we are hungry—I mean very hungry, starving—how can we work? do we not go mad? straightway our minds snap!"

"Certainly," said Saltichus, "they run together. The one failing, the other is incapacitated."

"And science and ingenuity help the one as the other," said Guy.

"Yes: I do not see how that lowers us, though," said Roeland.

"If there be no fuel, no fire will burn," said the Baroness van Hovenaar.

"We cultivate our bodies, by our pampering and epicurean diet," said Madame van Rosenhagen, "as much as we educate our minds by our clever books."

"No," said Lisa, "that is not right: is it, Dr. Saltichus?"

"Hardly. We give one stronger food than the other. Working the one unduly, at the same time we endanger the health of the other."

"Meat to our minds, do you mean, in our high state of cultivation, and milk to the other?"

"Yes—and often sour milk—with no pâtés and entrées."

"Oh!" said Lisa, who had begun to take an interest in cookery, "then let us give them up."

"And only care for our minds, Lisa?" asked Roeland.

"Ah! my friend Roeland," said the old diplomatist, tapping his jewelled snuff-box, and looking at him with affectionate reproof, "when are you going to join our ranks? when is your country's voice to be raised in thankfulness and praise for your labour? Your father used to speak to me in whispers of the dearest wish of his heart . . . ."

Roeland looked across to Lisa uneasily.

"O! Count van Rosenhagen," said Travers laughing. "Baron van Franckenburg prefers the glories and excitements of a sportsman's life. He likes freedom and liberty, and he chooses the study of nature before that of mankind."

"Mankind is a sad study, I should think," said the minister's wife, "and trusting to its follies and examples must be unworthy of a great spirit."

"But by listening to the expression of meannesses and follies we overcome them," said Lisa.

"Yes! and the freedom and liberty you talk of," said Saltichus, looking across to

Travers, "is only another word for rebellion and idleness, and for the shirking of all responsibility."

"I like to hear you all talk!" said Roeland. "You are all for pushing me on to the wheel. I suppose busy men instinctively hate those who seem to enjoy themselves. But you define no work for me, nor do you set any limit to my future industry."

"Limit! There is no limit!" said Adrian van Bruynesteyn.

"Your beloved liberty, Baron van Franckenburg," said another Dutch servant of the State,—a shrewd intelligent-looking man, "is a mistake. It is no liberty. It is power—abused, uncontrolled and mischievous both in its example and in its result: for it is selfish, and while making you unconscious of your duty to others, is crippling your resources, and making you dependent on others."

"Yes," said Saltichus eagerly; real liberty is victory gained; self and circumstance controlled, and the subject become the lord."

"To conquer, to command, and so to be

free. Yes," said Roeland, sadly. "But, my friends, you overrate my powers. Who am I, that I dare hope to tread the up-hill road so surely, that I may gain that top-most pinnacle? Lisa, I know, thinks . . . ."

"Nay, Roeland! you inherit the genius, I know, the patience necessary to success I fear you have lost; study and rules of life are scattered broad-cast over your sand-hills and coverts. Let me come with you and try to gather again the precious seed. Our friends will grace our golden harvest by-and-by, I know!"

"Ah! that is pretty!" said the count, and took his snuff with a sigh.

Roeland, colouring under his young wife's censure, launched forth into a brilliant tirade on careers.

"Our faculties dub us sovereign or subject," said Saltichus interrupting. "That you are sovereign and that your sceptre awaits you, there is no doubt."

Lisa thanked him with a glance.

"Yes!" said Guy, in a low voice, more to

himself than to Lisa, "we work out our freedom, like slaves work out their time of bondage. Our passions or our idleness are our chains."

"To be serious," said Roeland, "I cannot say I do not understand you. A man is no more free by saying so and by doing nothing, than by running into the desert and hiding himself there. I know what you mean. Discipline and knowledge, the liberty of law, the fulfilment of the highest duty as the mainspring of life—that is freedom."

"I am sure, my dear fellow," said Guy, sarcastically, "I see seated on your brow, the calm, the peace of power, the strength of purpose, and the conviction of success."

"There is no liberty," said Roeland testily. "It is all law. Law is our life. It is as eternal and as universal as God Himself. Perfection is its definite aim: on, far beyond this present system of world and light, it leads us. It is infinite."

"That theory frightens me," said Madame van Rosenhagen, shaking her bracelets; "it seems like a great prison hemming one in."

"It is no prison," said Roeland, calmly. "It is a source of peace and happiness. It does away with death and mortality. It lends a light to duty, and casts a gleam of hope and of purpose on our lightest action. It inspires us with endless energy and with youthful hope. It calms all doubt, and leads us to rest in the certainty of the Deity's approval. There, bright through the earth-born shadows which veil our eyes—there, in the distance—He governs, and we, free subjects, obey and reign with Him."

They were all listening. The half-open snuff-box, the half-raised hand of the old minister, the glass on the way to Van Bruynesteyn's lips, Guy's surprised looks, and Saltichus' half-sarcastic smile, all testified to their interest. Lisa listened proudly.

"And thus new life, new power, new hope, and new responsibilities come to us with full understanding. Attainment opens vistas of new worlds to conquer. As Saltichus says, we are sovereigns—if we like."

"Does not that magnify our responsibilities too much?" asked Saltichus.

"Not to me. On the contrary, it brings harmony. One does not *seem*, any longer; one *is*. There is no more fighting in the dark any longer. All is progress, aspiration, truth, light. Cultivation of ourselves and of others. Freedom, higher, purer, the nearer we approach to perfection. Happiness is not our duty, but to deserve happiness."

"Then, Baron van Franckenburg, do you think that breaking-in dogs and winning races with horses constitutes the quota of duty that you should contribute towards the world's amelioration?" asked the old statesman, glad to have caught him at last.

"No."

"Then why——"

And in the chorus of whys and wherefores that followed, Lisa gave the signal of rising from the table.

It was not till later, when they were sitting out in the soft evening, under the great cedar trees, and the men were sending wreaths of

blue smoke from sweet-smelling cigars into the clear air, that she got an opportunity of asking Guy about the Randolphs.

Guy was sitting slightly apart from the others; a bright rug was thrown over the low garden-chair in which he lounged.

Lisa took a chair near him.

"I feel like an Eastern prince," said he, "reposing on these gorgeous colours." Waiting in vain for response, he added, "Where have your thoughts flown? have they gone curling up with the smoke from my cigar into heaven—sifted into a purer essence by your clear mind, as the breezes dispel this blue wreath—see there, how it goes against the dark cedar! or are you dreaming of the far far East, of purple sunsets and lucid skies, of palm-trees, and bronzed men—of blazing suns, dark shadows, and gleaming horizons?"

"I am thinking of something much nearer home," answered Lisa, smiling. "Put away your Eastern visions, Mr. Travers, and come back with me to poor little Franewyk. You

can help me. I want to know about the Randolphs."

"What about them?"

He barely opened his mouth to say the words, and Lisa wondered if he would open it again to let her hear any more. Guy was always reticent on that subject.

"I want to know," she pursued confidingly, smiling as she leaned towards him, "if you think she is happy?"

"Happy! why shouldn't she be? Everything she wants, and a husband perfectly devoted to her!"

"Oh! yes—devoted to her!" stammered poor Lisa.

"I know women are always taking alarm," went on Guy, rather brutally, "and are always hoisting danger signals——"

"No; not that."

"Of course, I know it was very foolish of her to dye her hair."

Lisa laughed.

"Oh! I don't mean that. I forgot it in fact. Why did she do it?"

Guy found he had put his foot into it.

"Oh! nothing. A mere freak. Said she had nothing to do. You found her out of spirits to-day, I suppose, which has set your kind heart thinking."

"No; it was more her manner, her looks —her—I hardly know what."

"You found her looking ugly, I dare say. I begged you not to go, you know. Streaks like that are most unbecoming. Ugliness was the result of unhappiness, you thought, not of hair-dye?"

"Do be serious."

"Well, to be serious, I do not see how she can be unhappy with Randolph. He is such a good fellow. Dull sometimes she may be, for she is a good deal alone."

"Could I ask her here more? Could I do anything?" asked Lisa, timidly.

"You know best yourself, Madame Roeland."

He puffed away at his cigar obstinately.

"I mean—she is there—my neighbour—

English, rather solitary. She is, too, our old friend's wife. Ought I not——"

There was a prolonged silence.

"It might be playing with edged tools, perhaps," said he.

"But—if she is dull!" she exclaimed impulsively.

Roeland and Saltichus passed her with heads bent, deep in conversation.

"Roeland!" said Lisa, touching his sleeve; and rising, she leaned on the great cedar branch, and swayed herself to and fro as she looked up at him through the dark foliage; "I think Mrs. Randolph must be very dull. I thought so to-day. Mr. Travers thinks so, too. Will you let me ask her here very often —continually?"

Roeland frowned.

"I think that is her husband's affair, not yours," said he.

"Ah! but he is away all day."

"Is she dull?" questioned Saltichus. "Oh! I daresay that explains it. I often see her at the window from my house. As I pass

that way, I often hear restless snatches o music. Poor caged bird! I daresay she is dull."

"Yes. Oh! Roeland, you must let me."

"Very well," said he, quickly, as though to put the subject away for the present. "But just now, oblige me. Saltichus and I were talking about diamonds. I wish you would show him yours. I want him particularly to see that blue one——"

"Promise me 'Yes,' Roeland, and then I will."

"Shall we think about it just a little more?"

"No," said she wilfully.

"Very well, then, I promise. And now for the diamond."

* * * *

She moved towards the house, when Guy started to save her the journey. "Should he ask her maid?" but Roeland said:

"Let her go."

Then himself followed and accompanied her.

"Wilful wife," exclaimed he.

"Nay, Roeland. But *should* I be playing with edged tools?"

"Yes. You would."

"Tell me, Roeland, should I fear her?"

"You need fear her no more," said he contemptuously, "than I distrust you. But think, Lisa. They all thought in those old days that you and he would have married. Now what will they say if he should be here always?"

"Say?"

"Even now, as you proposed asking them, I saw Saltichus glance at your face as though he suspected that another motive lay below. Your eyes fixed steadily on mine, ready to face the world, shamed him, but still . . . ."

"Then I hate Doctor Saltichus! But Roeland, are we never to do good because others might suspect unworthy motives?"

He smiled upon her tenderly.

"I will take care. I will be very prudent and judicious. But I cannot bear to see Clara unhappy. I cannot bear to leave any-

thing undone that might do them both good, or make them happier together."

Then she went for the diamonds, and Roeland walked back to the others.

Presently a little Dutch maiden, as fresh as a snowdrop just peeping above ground, came tripping down the steps. She carried a jewel-box in her hands.

Saltichus and Guy both instinctively rose to meet her half-way, and relieved her of the burden.

A moment afterwards her mistress followed, and put the key into Roeland's hand.

For diamond lovers the sight was a dangerous one. Exclamations of surprise and delight burst from everyone's lips. The dazzling jewels flashed a thousand prismatic colours back to their admiring eyes.

"Oh! how lovely! Madame van Franckenburg, why do you not wear this oftener?" asked Madame van Rosenhagen. "I should have it on always. I should sleep in it."

It was a splendid blue diamond, set with smaller ones round it, in the form of a star.

"What a tender blue," said Van Bruynesteyn.

"I never saw a blue one so large. Is there any other of the same size?" asked Saltichus, evidently much interested.

He had it in his hand, and had put down the necklace and a handsome aigrette of artistic workmanship to look at it.

"There was a legend," said Roeland, "of one as large being found of late years in one of the Asiatic diamond fields. I was prepared to go to St. Petersburg or to London to see it, but I never could find out any more about it. Perhaps it was only a tale."

"It is perfectly beautiful!" said Saltichus. "Not a cloud or a flaw in it. Oh! Madame Roeland, Madame Roeland, if glittering gold gives beauty to poor humanity, what must this faultless diamond give to its possessor? This must be worth four or five thousand pounds, I should think?"

He turned to Roeland.

"It is a family gem. There are stories and legends about it innumerable. How

many fair ancestresses it has adorned, I should be afraid to say. I have had it valued, and you are not very far wrong."

"You have studied the subject, Saltichus?" asked Travers.

They all waited for the answer.

"I read a good deal about diamonds once," said he, carelessly, "and it is an amusing study, if the details of man's meanness and avarice do not sadden one. Madame Roeland, you would be surprised if you knew what virtues have been ascribed to the diamond. It has been held as a test of conjugal fidelity, an amulet to adjust quarrels; it has been supposed to have power against poisons, witchcraft, and ghosts."

He took the star again in his hand.

Madame van Rosenhagen was putting them on, handling them lovingly, replacing them regretfully all this time.

"Ah! Doctor Saltichus," said Lisa, laughing as she watched his excitement, "I hope your wife will have a great many diamonds—that when at last her beauty fade, you may

have them, at least, to feast your eyes on, and so find her a joy for ever."

"Don't you know, Madame van Franckenburg, that wives and diamonds are alike forbidden fruit to poor practitioners?"

"Then look not so longingly after temptation," said the Count.

"Forbidden fruit completes our Eden; Mother Eve was not exiled for looking and longing. Close not the gates of my Paradise so soon."

It was late when they separated, and when the doctor bade Lisa good-night, he added a friendly warning to keep her jewels out of his way.

"Ah! I do not fear," said she, shaking hands with him. "Not till you bring your bride for us to welcome, shall I get nervous. What can a man do with diamonds?"

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